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**Children as Researchers: Exploring Issues and Barriers
in English Primary Schools**

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Submitted in part requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

This thesis identifies and explores the issues and barriers that appear to influence children's and adults' experiences of children's engagement in self-directed empirical research in five English primary schools associated with the Children's Research Centre at The Open University. As far as is known, this is the first in-depth study of children as independent researchers in the context of English primary schools. A flexible, multimethod research design was adopted. Predominantly qualitative data was generated through focus groups held with, and questionnaires distributed to, the young researchers and their peers and through individual unstructured interviews with adults. The qualitative data generated through these methods was analysed in the style of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Quantitative data was subject to exploratory data analysis. This complemented and informed the qualitative analyses. The central categories which emerged from the data and, in particular, the identification of important issues by the children, have together informed the staged construction of a new model. This model illustrates the factors and processes that had an impact on both the children's experiences of research training and the research process and outcomes. The model demonstrates that these are inextricably interrelated. It is hoped that consideration of the issues and barriers identified will provide a basis for the further implementation and evaluation of young researcher initiatives in schools. The findings of the study have been drawn on to make recommendations for policy, practice and future research, particularly in those areas which are identified as significant by, and to, the children involved. It is also hoped that this study will address a gap in our knowledge and understanding of children as researchers and inform critical debate concerning children's voice and participation, adult-child power relationships and children's rights in English primary schools and more widely.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Nancy,
who has shown me that it is never too late to learn
and
to all the children I have worked with, who have taught me so much.

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My thanks go to Professor Mary Kellett and Dr. Dorothy Faulkner, my doctoral supervisors, and to Dr. Hilary Burgess for their encouragement and support.

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and to Tony, for giving me the space I have needed
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ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

CaR	Children as (active) researchers
Children's trusts	Children's Trusts bring together all services for children and young people in an area and are underpinned by the Children Act 2004 duty to focus on improving outcomes for all children and young people through inter-agency cooperation
CRAE	Children's Rights Alliance England
CRC	The Children's Research Centre at The Open University
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
Foundation Stage	Early years schooling (3-5 years)
G&T	Gifted and talented
Gifted and Talented	Government adopted designation for more able children in schools
KS1	Key Stage One (5 -7 years old)
KS2	Key Stage Two (7-11 years old)
National Curriculum	The school curriculum scheme which is mandated by the UK government for schools within its jurisdiction
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education
Primary School	School for children from the ages of 3 to 11* years (Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2)
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

* Until 2006, in the local education authority area in which the Children's Research Centre at The Open University is situated, primary schools included children up to 12 years old.

PREFACE

Each chapter in this thesis begins with a quotation taken from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) or from his later book, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871). Both Wonderland and the other side of the looking glass are places where Alice's curiosity leads her into all kinds of perplexing situations. Like the young researchers in this study, she asks questions to help her make sense of her experiences. Like them, she meets many frustrations along the way but, in the end, emerges wiser for all that. At one point in the story, Alice grows unexpectedly as the result of drinking from a magic bottle. She worries that, having already become so large, she will never be able to 'grow up' and so, unlike adults, will always have lessons to learn. She is wrong, of course. As this study shows, adults, too, have lessons to learn. And children can teach them.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Begin at the beginning,” the King said gravely, “and go on till you come to the end: then stop.”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

1.1 The background to the study

This thesis explores the experiences of children ‘as researchers’ in English primary schools. In particular, it focuses on the experiences of children and schools associated with the Children’s Research Centre at The Open University (CRC). The CRC was set up in 2004 following successful pilot studies with two cohorts of children in English primary schools (Kellett, 2003, 2005b). These studies established that children from the age of nine can engage meaningfully with research process as active, independent researchers when they are given appropriate training which ‘seeks to distil rather than dilute the research process’. The subsequent publication, *How to Develop Children as Researchers* (Kellett, 2005a), describes a differentiated structured training programme aimed at children with a wide range of abilities. Kellett’s philosophy embraces respect for children’s competencies, for children’s ‘voices’ and for children as experts on their own lives.

In the five years since its inauguration, a range of schools and organizations have commissioned the CRC to deliver training to develop children’s research skills and support their research projects. Several different training models have emerged; these are described in more detail in later chapters. Examples of research topics chosen by primary school children and a summary of the research training the children receive can be found in Appendix A. To date, however, apart from one small-scale study (Bucknall, 2005), there has been little research directed at understanding how children experience taking part in these programmes. Furthermore, some initiatives appear to have been more successful than others yet there has not been any attempt to understand why this is the case. Finally, although claims made regarding positive outcomes have usually been realised for the children, schools and organizations that have participated in Children as Researchers (CaR)

initiatives, systematic evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme has not been carried out.

As the intention of the programme is not only to develop young researchers' skills, but to give them a voice, it is particularly important to solicit their views in addition to those of their teachers. In keeping with the philosophy of the CRC, therefore, the research presented in this thesis seeks to listen to children's opinions on young researcher initiatives with a view to learning more about their perceptions of the value and relevance of CRC programmes and learning more about possible barriers to their participation and engagement.

This introduction describes the background to the research study, firstly in terms of the theoretical and empirical context in which it is situated; secondly in terms of its historical and political contexts¹, and thirdly in terms of personal motivation for developing the study. The aims and objectives of the study are then outlined. The concluding section outlines the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

1.1.1 Theoretical and empirical context

1.1.1.1 Perceptions of childhood and children's rights²

Young researcher initiatives have been conceived in a theoretical context that, over the past twenty years, has seen considerable debate concerning the status of children and children's rights. Perceptions of childhood and of what it means to be a child have changed considerably over time as documented by Ariès (1960) and more recently by Archard (2004). It is now widely accepted that such perceptions are culturally influenced: some

¹ It should be noted that this thesis relates to English primary schools. Where central government policies are referred to for information, explanation or illustration, these are policies which apply in England but which may not apply in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

² In this thesis, the terms 'children' and 'child' are used to refer to those aged 11 years and under. Those aged from 12 to 17 years inclusive are referred to as 'young people'. However, it needs to be borne in mind that the UNCRC refers to all those under 18 years as children.

children have little participation in employment but high levels of protection; others are quasi-adult workers with little protection (Jans, 2004). In some communities, the role of working children in contributing to their family's economic and care needs is essential (Qvortrup *et al*, 1994; Morrow, 1999; Archard, 2004; Woodhead, 2005). In contrast, in many European and North American cultures, children are seen as 'adults in the making' rather than as citizens in their own right (Prout and James, 1997; Woodhead and Montgomery, 2003; Kellett *et al*, 2004b). They have enjoyed little autonomy, independence or rights (Christensen and Prout, 2005) and have been excluded from the sphere of public life (Qvortrup, 1994).

These perceptions position the child as incomplete and incompetent, promote all children as needy and deny them independent rights (Wyness, 2001). As Hartas argues, 'perceiving children to be vulnerable, with limited powers for representation, participation and citizenship, marginalises them' (2008:4). According to this view, children's relationships with adults are seen as dependent rather than interdependent, with adults required to act and make decisions on behalf of children. In 1991, the UK Government ratified the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989). The Convention confers on children a comprehensive set of economic, cultural, social and political rights. It also states that children's best interests are to be a primary consideration for policy and decision makers and that the evolving capacity of children must be factored into law and policy. Despite the Government's ratification of the Convention, however, it has yet to incorporate it directly into UK law. Nevertheless, Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC, by requiring that children's views must be sought and given due weight in all matters affecting them, added 'participation' rights to children's traditional rights to 'protection' from neglect and abuse and 'provision' of goods and services. This has paved the way for them to voice their opinions on activities and decisions which shape their lives and means that traditional notions of childhood and children's status are no longer tenable.

Mayall (2003), for example, suggests that childhood should enjoy a higher status. She discusses how the 'sociology of childhood' provides an alternative standpoint from which to study children and childhood that challenges the view of children as the passive products of adult influences. According to this view, childhood is seen as socially constructed and as part of society rather than as a prior stage on the path to adulthood (James and Prout, 1997). This paradigm shift has led to children being regarded as social actors in their own right (Qvortrup, 1994; James *et al*, 1998). Lee argues, however, that by attributing to children 'the [agentic] properties assumed more normally to belong to adults', sociologists of childhood 'privilege [...] the complete and the mature over the incomplete and immature' (1998:458). He contends that the two opposing positions of children as 'becomings' and 'beings' introduced by Qvortrup (1994) suggest, respectively, that society either completes children when they achieve adulthood or that children do not need the support of adults to achieve agency. He maintains that positioning children as ontologically established and independent 'beings' implies that agency does not emerge from patterns of dependency. Rather, it is seen by proponents of the sociology of childhood as an inherent property and possession of children. While not refuting children's agency, Lee, however, proposes an alternative 'immature sociology' which recognises agency as 'an effect of independence that emerges from a fundamental dependency' (1998:459,472).

Similarly, Mayall and Zeiher (2003) argue for a 'generational perspective'. This perspective became a focus of study in the final decade of the 20th century and centres on the concept of a generational order or 'systematic pattern of social relationships between adults and children within which children are located and constituted as a social group' (Prout, 2002:70). Prout explains how this perspective acknowledges the diversity of childhoods and allows the development of a 'conceptual autonomy' which separates children from the institutional contexts within which they have traditionally been concealed. This view conceptualises childhoods (and adulthoods) as constructed through

the agency of both children and adults in the process of ‘generationing’ (Mayall and Zeiher, 2003:2). Finally, Uprichard (2008) has recently critiqued the notion of the child as ‘being’ as this ignores the future (‘becoming’) status of children, the temporality of childhood and children’s own visions of themselves as future adults.

1.1.1.2 The citizenship status of children in England

Unlike changing perceptions of childhood, the citizenship status of children has been relatively neglected in the literature (Howe and Covell, 2005; Lister, 2006). Consequently, perceptions of children as citizens in the making rather than of the present have remained largely uncontested (Roche, 1999; Lister, 2006; Wyness, 2006b). It is clear, however, that where the status of children is seen as that of future adults, and where their freedom to act is restricted to the private spheres of family and school, this poses major obstacles to children’s recognition as citizens despite recent changes in national and international legislation (see, for example, Roche, 1999; Devine 2002; Osler and Starkey, 2006).

For example, the Children’s Commissioner for England (until 2010, Al Aynsley Green) declared at the time of his appointment that ‘children are now citizens’ (quoted in Lister, 2006:22), appearing, therefore, to signal a turn of direction. Rhetoric here, however, serves only to highlight inconsistencies in the UK Government’s approach. Documentation relating to the National Curriculum for Citizenship (see, for example, DfES, 2002a) speaks only in terms of preparing children to play a role as citizens.

Such and Walker (2005) contrast Government policy initiatives which emphasise children’s dependency on their parents and which idealise childhood as a time of innocence with those that underline the responsibilities children have to themselves and to others. In England and Wales, for example, the age of criminal responsibility is ten yet young people do not have full citizenship rights conferred upon them until they are eighteen. Thus, at one and the same time, children of ten and over are deemed to be

responsible for their actions and incapable of exercising responsibility, reinforcing the idea that children lack social and moral competence.

Drawing on their own and others' research, Such and Walker argue that children actively construct a 'moral, responsible self' (2005:53) through their interactions in a network of important relationships. Also, as the literature attests, children frequently take on responsibilities in caring or volunteering roles, both within the family and in their communities, highlighting how adults might come to depend on children (see, for example, Qvortrup, 1994; Stalford, 2000; Lister, 2006; Tarapdar, 2007). Policy is thus seen to demonstrate a lack of engagement with the realities of the lives of many children in the United Kingdom today (John, 1995; Prout, 2000; Hill *et al*, 2004).

Similarly, Holden (2006) and Taylor *et al* (2008) discuss research that refutes notions of children's innocence and demonstrates that children of primary school age are aware of community, national and global issues, including racism, violence, poverty, terrorism and substance abuse. Moreover, children claim that they would like to be more involved in helping to solve problems and to be better informed. The research topics chosen by some young researchers support this position (see, for example, Watson, 2004; O'Brian, 2005; Okpara and Niran, 2007). Additionally, although the number of young people involved in the UK Youth Parliament (and in the Northern Ireland Youth Forum, Funky Dragon in Wales and the Scottish Youth Parliament) is relatively small, denying citizenship rights to children on the basis of their irresponsibility and innocence seems unwarranted. Indeed, Howe and Covell (2005) consider it disrespectful to deny children the status of citizens on the basis of economic dependency when the unpaid work they do and the contributions they make to their immediate communities are valued (see also Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Stalford, 2000).

Although Hart asserts that 'participation is the fundamental right of citizenship' (1992:5), it is important to remember that children's rights to participate, to express opinions and to

be heard are mediated through adults (Wyness, 2006a). Nevertheless, the discourse of children's participation is seen to offer the potential for change, not least because engagement with the rights agenda foregrounds the needs of marginalised groups (Stalford, 2000; Roche, 1999). Roche (1999) argues that it is unwarranted to marginalize children on the grounds that their status is perceived as problematic or because there is a lack of recognition of their strengths and their contribution to society (although Thomas points out that children are, in any case, 'in a general sense marginal' if only because they are children 'in a society and culture where adulthood is hegemonic, and where adult language and adult practices are normative' (2009a:192)). Roche (1999) urges a 'rethinking' of citizenship for children which builds on the interdependence between them and adults. This stance resonates with that of Willow *et al* who propose citizenship for both adults and children as 'an entitlement to recognition, respect and participation' which would suggest 'new ways for adults and children to relate to each other in their daily lives' (2004:8).

Young's (1989) notion of 'differentiated citizenship', with its emphasis on group rights, has the potential to accommodate children as a different social group and to acknowledge their particular needs and interests (Howe and Covell, 2005:53). This model accords in some respects with that of Moosa-Mitha (2005) who proposes a 'difference-centred' approach to children's citizenship which focuses on the very fact that children are different to adults. It is on the basis of their identity as children that their status needs to be taken seriously. She argues that a difference-centred approach 'liberates' theorizations of citizenship from the dichotomies of citizen or non-citizen by providing

a space where childhood is acknowledged as being an important stage in life without referencing to adulthood as a norm or standard by which children get constructed as 'not-yet-adults', where children's difference, both real and constructed, is not understood in terms of 'less-than' (2005:378).

Moosa-Mitha's analysis recognises children's interests as 'publicly significant' (2005:377). As Devine argues, however, accepting a change in the status of children requires an attendant change in 'the structural positioning of children and adults in society at large' (2002:305). Similarly, Roche maintains that acknowledging the worth of children's contributions to society is about power and about sharing a world 'hitherto defined and imagined primarily in adult terms' (1999:487). He agrees with Minnow that the interdependent nature of citizenship should be recognised and should replace the current focus on the relations between state and individual. Minnow argues that if adults can overcome perceptions of adult-child relationships as 'naturally and necessarily hierarchical', this might create the spaces within which children can 'participate in the shifting of boundaries' (quoted in Roche, 1999:485).

Wyness *et al* (2004) identify failure to take children's interests seriously as one of the reasons children have been unable to communicate effectively with wider society. They argue that rather than any supposed incompetence, children have not been given the opportunity to express their opinions on social and political issues. They go on to suggest that spaces that would allow children to acquire and practise these citizenship skills are more likely to succeed at 'a small-scale community level' (2004:95).

Schools, therefore, would seem to provide ideal spaces in which children might acquire these skills. It is noted, however, that although Wyness *et al* see the introduction of Citizenship education through the National Curriculum as 'prioritising children's participation as young citizens' (2004:83), Moosa-Mitha (2005) considers the Citizenship curriculum to involve passive instruction rather than a dynamic approach to citizenship, thus depriving children of the skills, values and knowledge they need to be active citizens and conveying to them that citizenship is to be judged by adult norms. Moreover, the Government ignored the Council of Europe's recommendation that children's rights should be included in the Citizenship curriculum (Howe and Covell, 2005; Davies, 2000). This is

in direct contravention of Article 42 of the UNCRC which specifies that governments must make its provisions known to both adults and children. Crucially, since democratic citizenship cannot be achieved if people do not know about their rights (Howe and Covell, 2005), depriving children of the essential understanding of their rights as children denies them status as citizens.

1.1.2 Historical and political context

Increased emphasis on the rights and involvement of children as participant and co-researchers in research projects (Jones, 2004; Hartas, 2008) and the move towards enabling children to become self-directed researchers (Kellett *et al*, 2004b) have had two principal drivers. The first has been the shift in perspectives on the status of the child in Western societies towards acknowledging children as social actors in their own right, as discussed above (Qvortrup, 1994; James *et al*, 1998). The second of these, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989), has been instrumental in informing views on children's status and levels of participation. Articles 12 and 13 of the Convention have been particularly influential, stating that children have the right to seek, receive and communicate information and opinions which relate to issues affecting them.

Reports of children and young people as self-directed researchers in schools attest to the potential such involvement has for their empowerment and personal development (Fielding, 2001a, 2004a; Kellett, 2003, 2005b) yet these are *adult* views of possible outcomes. Such accounts rarely account for children's own perspectives and interpretations of their experiences. Adult claims, therefore, are not fully supported. This is a crucial consideration since one of the intentions of training children as researchers is to afford them a 'voice' which is listened to and heard by adults (Fielding, 2004a; Kellett, 2005b; Robinson and Taylor, 2007). Moreover, the focus on outcomes obscures the complex and multi-faceted nature of the process which such initiatives involve. Research exploring the experiences of adults who have been directly involved with or who have witnessed the

children's training and support is also scarce. Consequently, there is a gap in the literature concerning children as active researchers. This is especially so as it relates to children in primary schools in England, where young researcher initiatives remain uncommon (Kellett, forthcoming).

1.1.2.1 The United Kingdom Government's response to the UNCRC

Although the United Kingdom Government ratified the 1989 UNCRC in 1991, no legislation was drawn up to support its undertaking. The Government expressed the view that English law, notably through the provisions of The England and Wales Children Act 1989, was more comprehensive in addressing the issues raised. This stance has been roundly condemned especially when attending to children's rights (Freeman, 2002; Hartas, 2008). Mayall (2002) stresses that although the Act requires local authority social services to elicit and take into account the views of children in their care, this is only a small minority of children. She points out that, as there is no provision within the Act for similar practices in the health and education sectors, the views of the majority of children who use these services are excluded: thus, the provisions of the Act fail to comply with the UNCRC.

After the first of the United Kingdom's mandatory regular reports on its progress in implementing the precepts of the Convention (UN, 1994), the UN Committee recommended that increased attention to Articles 3 and 12 was a priority. The UK Government was advised to 'consider the possibility of establishing further mechanisms to facilitate the participation of children in decisions affecting them, including within the family and community' (United Nations, 1995:5).

The UK Government's second report, submitted in 1999 and updated by the Government in 2002 when they felt there had been 'significant developments' in its attitude to working with children, was intended to reflect 'a new approach to children across the UK' and 'a commitment to listen to children and young people' (UK Government, 2002:1,2) (rather

suggesting that, despite ratification, such a commitment may previously have been absent). Despite the Government's declared intentions, the UN Committee observed that further steps needed to be taken 'to promote, facilitate and monitor systematic, meaningful and effective participation of all groups of children' and 'to acknowledge publicly the views expressed by children and the impact they have on developing programmes and policies and reflect how they are taken into consideration' (United Nations, 2002:7).

The third UK Government report to the UN Committee was submitted in July 2007 for inspection in 2008. One encouraging move towards the effective participation of children and young people has been their engagement in this process. Evidence from their nationwide *Get Ready for Geneva* rights investigation (CRAE, 2008a) was presented directly to the UN Committee by a delegation of children and young people. However, provision for the respect of children's views was still regarded as patchy (CRAE, 2007). In fact, the UN Committee made 124 recommendations 'showing where the UK Government is falling short of its obligations' (CRAE, 2008b:4). Observation 14, for example, pointed out that the Convention was not 'regularly used as a framework for the development of strategies' and that there was a 'lack of an overarching policy to ensure the full realization of the principles, values and goals of the Convention'. As a further example, Observation 21 recommended that the UK Government needed to 'strengthen its efforts, to ensure that all of the provisions of the Convention are widely known and understood by adults and children alike [as required by Article 42], inter alia by including the Convention in statutory national curriculum and ensuring that its principles and values are integrated into the structures and practice of all schools' (UN, 2008).

1.1.2.2 Every Child Matters

The impact of the UN Committee's responses to the second UK periodic report (2002) is apparent in the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003). The Paper proposes changes in children's services in order to help achieve five specific outcomes, namely to *be*

healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. These changes are legally underpinned by The Children Act 2004.

The five outcomes were identified following consultation with children, young people and families about what was important in helping children to lead happy lives. Ostensibly supportive of the Government's declared intention to listen to children and young people, and of the UN Committee's rather more focused recommendations, the Paper declares that 'there was broad agreement' that these are five outcomes that 'really matter for children and young people's well-being' (DfES, 2003:14). Yet, scrutiny of the Paper reveals a startling lack of transparency about how the consultation process was carried out and no evidence is provided to support these claims. Indeed, it is far from clear who was party to such 'broad agreement'.

It is also worth noting that the aims of these outcomes could be interpreted as being as much in the Government's interests as those of the children, namely that children will grow up not to be a drain on the State, for example, by not making demands on the National Health Service or the criminal system and by creating wealth, thus becoming tax payers. The notion that children need to enjoy and achieve is curious (emphasis added); perhaps children are not expected to enjoy their childhoods for their own sake. Questioning 'the reality of children's engagement' in this consultation exercise, Kelley asserts the need to make clear the difference between listening to what children have to say and involving them in policy formation, the latter requiring collaborative rather than 'exploitative or tokenistic' practices (2006:37).

More positively, the Paper also makes clear the expectation that local authorities, working with children's trusts, should involve children and young people in their areas in finding out what works best for them. A *Children and Young People's Plan* must then be drawn up by every local authority, acted upon and updated each year. Other related initiatives include The Children's Fund, a significant DCSF funded initiative which targets children

aged five to thirteen years who are at risk of social exclusion (Coad and Lewis, 2004); the Lottery funded Participation Works (2006), an online facility designed to help adults and children access and share information about children's involvement in decision making; Hear by Right (Badham and Wade, 2005) which, under the umbrella of the National Youth Agency, offers standards for both statutory and voluntary organisations to help improve the ways in which they involve children and young people in decision making, and Children's Rights Alliance England, a charitable institution which runs the 'Ready, Steady, Change' training programme. This initiative is targeted at organisations who wish to increase children's and young people's effective participation in decision-making and has been developed in collaboration with them (CRAE, 2007).

The desire for children and young people to 'make a positive contribution' suggests the potential for forms of participation despite also intimating responsibilities rather than rights, yet, on the Government web page outlining the Articles (DfES, 2006a), it is stated that the general principles of the Convention include

the right to life, survival and development, the right to non-discrimination, respect for the views of children and to give consideration to a child's best interests, and the requirement to give primary consideration to the child's best interests in all matters affecting them (emphases added).

The right of children to express their views freely in all matters affecting them is not made explicit here. Potential difficulty also surrounds the issue of who should identify the child's 'best interests'. Hill *et al* (2004) draw attention to possible conflict between adults' and children's priorities and state that 'genuine dialogue' is needed to ensure that it is the needs felt by children that are addressed, not the needs attributed to them by adults. Otherwise, children are forced to adopt a passive role, reinforcing their perceived incompetence, irrationality and inability to make sensible decisions.

1.1.2.3 The Children's Plan

The Children's Plan (2007) was drawn up by the recently created Department for Children, Schools and Families in the face of criticism from the UN Committee of the Government's lack of progress in implementing the UNCRC. Its declared aim is 'to put the needs of families, children and young people at the centre of everything' the Government does (DCSF, 2007:3). It lists the five principles which have guided its conception; attention to children's rights is not among them. This is surprising since it declares (but only in Annex B) that the Plan 'is underpinned throughout by the General Principles of the UNCRC' (DCSF, 2007:210); these do not correspond with the Plan's guiding principles and the main body of the text makes no reference to either children's rights or the UNCRC. A later progress report, produced in response to the UN Committee's 'Concluding Observations' (2008), is illuminating in this respect. Again, in an Annex (A), it acknowledges the role of the Observations in providing 'a helpful framework for further action by Government, building on measures already in place, to make children's rights under the Convention a reality' (DCSF, 2008a:208). Those that read beyond the main body of the text are thus rewarded by this apparent acknowledgement that, in some respects at least, these rights do not yet enjoy this standing. As Payne concludes, 'to date, any reference to the [UN]CRC has been tagged on to policies rather than used as the starting point for policy development or legal reform' (2009:151). It is tempting to surmise that such 'tagging on' is both literal and metaphorical.

1.1.2.4 The Children's Commissioner (England)

The post of Commissioner, proposed in *Every Child Matters* and legislated for in the 2004 Children Act was ostensibly guided by the UNCRC. Although *Every Child Matters* states that pupils should make a positive contribution by engaging in decision-making, the DirectGov guide to the Children's Commissioner (2005) makes it clear that the appointee's role is 'to speak on behalf of children and young people in England' and that it is 'up to him to consult them' on 'matters that he chooses to research'. The Commissioner's role, it

seems, is to speak for and on behalf of children and young people rather than enabling them to develop the skills of speaking for themselves (DfES, 2006b).

Lyon (2006) offers an incisive critique of the role of the English Commissioner. Despite the Commissioner's apparent intention to take up the children's rights agenda, Lyon argues that he has no legal basis for doing so. She likens the English Commissioner's role to that of 'a potential toothless tiger' (2006:113). She goes on to argue that the post is one of relative powerlessness, especially when compared to those of the Children's Commissioners for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, whose remits are explicitly rights-based (see also Thomas, 2005; UK Children's Commissioners, 2008). Such concerns are shared by those children's organisations that are working hard to promote a more significant voice for children (Lyon, 2006). Although other UK commissioners are required to follow the guidelines of the UNCRC in promoting an understanding and an awareness of the importance of the rights of children, the English Commissioner is required only to 'promote an awareness of the views and interests of children'. Moreover, he is expected to attend to these only as far as these relate to the five 'outcomes' identified in the Green Paper. The resulting lack of independence from Government is a cause of disquiet among the four UK Children's Commissioners, a concern reported by them to the UN Committee in 2008.

The English Commissioner's statutory duty is thus seen to 'pursue the aims of an agenda set by parliament' (Lyon, 2006:114). As Lyon points out, not only is this in contravention of the UK's undertakings in ratifying the UNCRC but it also, significantly, results from a decision made in the Commons to remove from the Children Act an amendment made in the House of Lords that promoted children's rights. 'An entirely rights-based commissioner will not,' it was declared, 'best serve the interests of children in England' (Hodge, 2004). So, while Mayall cites the appointment of England's Children's Commissioner to support her claim that children's rights are now 'higher on the agenda

than in 1990' (2006:15), her concomitant assertion that 'England seems to hold a unique set of ideas about children and childhood' (2006:11), when compared to other northern European countries, seems more apposite.

1.1.2.5 Positioning the child in school

Following on from *Every Child Matters*, *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* states that schools need to 'help pupils [build] stronger relationships' with 'the wider community' (DfES, 2004b:1). However, the development of 'dawn-to-dusk' schools and the system of 'educare' (DfES 2004c:7) required under the legislation of the Children Act 2004 seems likely only to further segregate children from their wider communities. Within this sphere, as adults in the making and as 'products' rather than 'consumers' of the education system (Wyness, 1999; Devine, 2002), children appear to be valued by Government agencies for their potential as the workforce of the future (Lister, 2006). Policy changes in education have increased government control over the content and focus of children's education (Parton, 2006). *The Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners*, for example, opens with the words 'Children, and all those who learn, are our future' (DfES, 2004c:3), linking the development of the National Curriculum with questions about whether or not the education system 'was really meeting the needs of employers and society' (2004e:4). This appears paradoxical given that the strategy also acknowledges a greater need for individualised learning, with 'the wishes and needs of children, parents and learners centre-stage' (2004d:7). It is pertinent to consider here Parton's (2006) conviction that rhetorical placement of the child at the centre of policy developments does not mean that such developments are child-centred. It is, Wyness (1999) argues, difficult for teachers to respond to pupils as individuals when the focus in schools is on nationally prescribed standards and outcomes measured by regular testing.

Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-de-Brie see the reported increase in action research in the field of education as a positive step in 'giving voices and visibility' to a group in society

that has traditionally been ‘silenced’ (2006:127). Attributing this to the sociology of childhood’s perspective on children as social actors and to the children’s rights movement, they do, however, warn that such research may have implicit dangers when it leads to ‘emancipatory pedagogy’ (2006:139). Since children are generally viewed as a homogeneous group the voices of some children who do not conform to the ‘norm’ are effectively suppressed. Rather than being able to take advantage of the perceived benefits of interventions, they become further excluded within the community of the school. Wyness (1999) takes up this argument, describing how the seclusion of children in schools has the effect of confirming them as a single social group, thus obscuring the factors which differentiate them. Children are, therefore, ‘positioned differently’ in school (Wyness, 1999:363), with the interplay of factors such as gender, culture and ethnicity influencing their individual experiences (James and James, 2004). When government rhetoric speaks of the child at ‘the heart of our programmes’ (Hodge, quoted in Kelley, 2006:38), it seems to be a ‘standardised’ child which is the focus of its attentions.

Devine (2002) states that the rights discourse in the context of education focuses primarily on children’s collective rights to education rather than on children’s experiences within the system itself. Children do not have the right to be consulted in decisions made, for example, about which school they might attend or to participate in tribunals making decisions about possible exclusion. Wyness *et al* also make the distinction that while children quite rightfully have rights to welfare, and necessarily rely on adults to provide this, they also have ‘rights to self-determination’ which emphasise children’s agency, ‘with children doing things for themselves’ (2004:88). This seems particularly relevant when the status of children in school is considered since they are positioned as subordinate to adults who control their time, space and interaction (Mayall, 2000; Devine, 2002) and whose interests are likely to conflict with those of their pupils (Alderson, 1999).

Prout (2001) suggests that policy initiatives in schools (and elsewhere) would be more effective if children's active role in producing 'local realities' was acknowledged. Children need to be viewed as occupying a position within a net-like system of relationships rather than being seen to occupy a lowly position in a more traditional hierarchical model of associations (Prout, 2001). Rooted in the standpoint of the sociology of childhood, this challenge further intensifies the call to discard the view of children as 'passive receptors' of educational processes (James and James, 2004:117).

1.1.3 Personal motivations for conducting the study

This thesis evolved from my personal interest in the Children's Research Centre (CRC) at The Open University. The CRC, established in 2004, is a pioneering initiative in the training and development of children and young people as researchers. My involvement with the CRC began when I was a primary school teacher and took on the role of an adult CRC facilitator, leading ultimately to a masters dissertation (Bucknall, 2005). This earlier exploration of primary-school children's perceptions of the outcomes of their engagement in self-directed active research ignited a deeper interest and an aspiration to study this at doctoral level.

I had become aware that initiatives in schools to support children's empowerment through enabling them to become researchers raised complex issues that went beyond power differentials between adults and children. I found myself convinced by the argument that children's participation in the decision making processes of their schools and communities could be informed through their engagement in young researcher initiatives. It was clear to me, however, that there were other issues and barriers, not least the context of the children's training and research, which were likely to influence their experiences and affect outcomes. This realisation informed the aims and objectives of the research reported in this study.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the study

This thesis aims to explore both children's and adults' experiences of children's engagement in self-directed research in their schools. By gathering together the views of children and adults who have been involved in CaR initiatives, it is anticipated that a more comprehensive account of the factors which influence these experiences can be constructed. It is hoped that this will address a gap in our knowledge and understanding of children as researchers and further advance critical evaluation of current theory relating to the status of the child in society (and, more specifically, in English schools) today, children's participation, adult-child power relationships, children's competencies and the 'voice' afforded to children. It might also have implications for future young researcher initiatives in schools, providing a basis for further implementation and evaluation. Finally, it is hoped that the findings will suggest directions for future research, particularly in those areas which are identified as significant by, and to, the children involved.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter is followed by a critical review of the literature pertaining to the issues which surround children as researchers and, more specifically, to the English primary school as a context for such initiatives. The literature review ends by setting out the research questions which frame this study. The methodological approach adopted is then described and rationales given for the choices made. Presentation and interpretation of the data then follows. The penultimate chapter discusses the findings of the study, relating these to the literature. Finally, conclusions are drawn, recommendations are made and the contribution the study makes is confirmed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Nonsense!” said Alice, very loudly and decidedly, and the Queen was silent. The King laid his hand upon her arm, and timidly said, “Consider, my dear. She is only a child!”

Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

2.1 Introduction

The move towards enabling children to become researchers in their own right brings into play a complex set of concepts, issues and influences which appear to be particularly evident in primary schools. This review of the literature offers a discussion of some of these important issues. Building on the discussion of the theoretical, empirical, historical and political contexts for the study which formed the core of the introductory chapter, it begins by examining the debates which surround the topical issue of children’s participation. The following sections look at children’s ‘voices’ and power and empowerment. The review then ends with an account of the underlying principles which support the notion of children as active researchers and with the research questions which arise from the preceding discussion.

2.2 Children’s Participation

2.2.1 Introduction

Despite the concerns raised in the previous chapter, a move towards an increase in the participation of children in a variety of social and institutional contexts, not only in the making of decisions which affect them but also in research into their own lives, has been driven by three main influences. These are the recognition of children as social actors in their own right; their concomitant recognition as consumers or ‘users’ of products and services, and the increased attention paid to children’s rights since the implementation of the UNCRC in 1989 (Shier, 2001; Kirby *et al*, 2003; Coad and Lewis, 2004; Sinclair, 2004; Cairns and Brannen, 2005). Building on the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1959, the UNCRC, notably, added the

‘participation’ rights of children to the earlier stated rights of ‘provision’ and ‘protection’. As Skelton points out, the focus on children’s participation rights is ‘embedded’ (2007:167) in the UNCRC, reflecting changes in the ways in which children are viewed. It is ironic, therefore, that children themselves were not involved in the preparation of the Convention (John, 1995). As Hill and Tisdall state appositely, ‘in the past decades, the moral coinage of rights has been applied to children, typically by adults on children’s behalf’ (1997:21).

The following discussion examines how these closely related issues interweave in their impact on how children’s participation is defined, on levels of children’s participation and on the purposes which children’s participation can serve.

2.2.2 What is meant by children’s participation?

As Skelton affirms, ‘participation’ is ‘the word, concept and discourse’ to engage with when working with children and young people, and is offered as a ‘panacea’ for many of the problems they face (2007:165, emphasis in original). However, participation, as it relates to children’s involvement, is variously defined, reflecting the contexts in which participation activities take place, their perceived purposes and the value which is consequently attached to them. To illustrate the point, *A Good Childhood* (Layard and Dunn, 2009), described by the publishers as a ‘landmark’ report for the Children’s Society about the experiences of childhood, makes much of the importance of listening to and consulting with children. However, it appears that children were not valued sufficiently to be invited to be members of the inquiry panel which was constructed entirely of adults. Children participated here only in so far as their views provided data and, as is so often the case where children have participated in a process, the explanations and interpretations of their views are invariably those given by adults.

This example highlights the differences between adult-centric concepts of participation and children’s perspectives about what this involves (Morrow, 1999; Shier, 2001). As Morrow

notes (1999), there are tensions between two definitions of participation identified by Boyden and Ennew: that is, participation as ‘taking part in’ or being present and participation as ‘knowing one’s actions are taken note of and may be acted upon’ (1997:33). Child participation, it seems, can signify ‘a process’ or ‘an outcome’ (Thomas, 2007:199). As Ennew states, it is ‘a little understood and poorly defined fashion’ (2002:395). Consequently, in situations where children are said to be participating, they may occupy different positions on a participation ‘continuum’, ranging from passive to active. When ‘involvement’ or ‘consultation’ are appropriated as ‘participation’, passivity is the likely consequence.

The Encarta World Dictionary (1999) defines ‘consultation’ as ‘the process of discussing something especially in order to ascertain opinions’, suggesting dialogue in which children might take part on an equal footing with adults. However, as Cairns points out ‘young people’s experience has been of consultation as an event, in which the powerful (adults) consult and the powerless (children and young people) are consulted’ (2001:357). This point is elaborated by Miller (1997), who explains that power held by the people seeking views is evident in their control over topic and methods, the time frame in which a consultation takes place and the impact it might have. Where this is the case, therefore, children are forced to adopt a passive role. Consultation is something that is done to them. ‘Participation’, on the other hand, ‘the act of taking part in an activity’ suggests something more dynamic. Two further definitions of participation, as it relates to children, are likely to be particularly helpful. Hart explains this as ‘the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives’ (1992:5) while Davies *et al* identify it as ‘involvement in a collective decision-making process with a recognizable social and/or educational outcome’ (2006:11).

Clearly related to Boyden and Ennew’s (1997) definition of participation as something more than merely being present, these perceptions of participation as a dynamic process

seem to affirm children as social agents. Nevertheless, it is evident that differentiating between the processes of consultation and participation is not clear-cut. It is possible, for example, to participate in consultation. Some methods used to elicit children's views may be participatory or they may not, depending on the context and way in which they are used. Lansdown, who groups approaches to participatory work with children into three 'broad' categories ('consultative processes', 'participative initiatives' and 'promoting self-advocacy') (2001:16), expands on this idea of shifting boundaries, claiming that projects might move from one category to another not only during the development of the project but also as the confidence of both children *and* adults grows (emphasis added).

Participation, according to Miller (1997), implies joint ownership of the decision-making process, the active involvement of all parties and power sharing. Sinclair (2004) suggests that children are only likely to feel empowered when they can see that they have had an influence on decision making that has prompted change. However, it is clear that participation does not always involve either power sharing or empowerment for children. Adults are equally capable of exerting power over children when they resist children's participation or when they make decisions about whether it is appropriate or not. In this context, it is unfortunate that Article 12 of the UNCRC can be called on to support such decisions since it makes clear that the 'views' which the child has the right to express freely in all matters affecting her or him are to be 'given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'. As Article 12 appears to put the onus on adults to decide whether the child's views are worthy of consideration, presumably the views of younger, less mature children can be taken less seriously. It is clear that adults still wield the power here. Arnstein makes the fundamental point that 'participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless' (1969, web document:1.1).

Participatory projects are shaped by the personal knowledge, skills and motivations of adults working with children, their access to resources and their understanding of the skills

and status of children and of what participation might be – and might be for. Consequently, these factors are likely to be key in influencing the levels of participation that can be claimed in both individual projects and in organizational contexts. While Tisdall ‘celebrates the success of the rhetorical push for children and young people’s participation’ (2008:419), she calls for current practice to be subject to renewed and more challenging theorisations and argues that these are needed to address the complexities of the contexts and systems within which children participate (see also Thomas, 2007).

However, the DfES (2005b) does acknowledge the difficulties in turning commitment into long-term ‘meaningful’ practice for children and young people which can effect useful organisational change. It states that if the outcomes identified in *Every Child Matters* are to be successful in doing this, ‘it is important to be clear what they mean in practice and how progress towards them will be measured’ (DfES, 2005b). As Middleton (2006) declares, targets alone cannot guarantee good practice. The situation is compounded by confusion about what the aims of children’s participation are and by the fact that any expectations about these are likely to vary according to the roles of those involved in participatory initiatives (Murray and Hallett, 2000). In order to assess how different levels of participation might be invoked, the next section offers some examples of typologies of children’s participation.

2.2.3 Typologies of participation

Writing in 1969, Arnstein observed that ‘since those who have power normally want to hang on to it, historically it has to be wrested by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful (web document:3.6). The ‘Ladder of citizen participation’ (1969) which she presented illustrates the different stages in this struggle. This model has been adapted by others to produce a variety of typologies which more specifically relate to work with children. Hart’s ‘Ladder of Participation’ (1992:9) is, perhaps, that most often cited. Although described by Pridmore as ‘a powerful tool for project evaluation’ (1998:308),

this model has been subject to criticism and has caused a degree of confusion, not least because of its chosen format.

Moving upwards from levels of what Hart terms ‘non-participation’ (*manipulation, decoration and tokenism*), the rungs of the ladder achieve five further levels of ‘participation’ with *child-initiated shared decisions with adults* shown at the top (Figure 2.1). According to this model, the UK Government’s *The Children’s Plan* (DCSF, 2007) seems to require participation at the level of the middle two rungs: *consulted and informed* and *adult initiated, shared decisions with children* although it could be argued that they have yet to progress beyond tokenism. The difficulty with deciding where the government sits on this ladder points to an inherent problem with the model. Reddy and Ratna criticize its implicitly sequential nature, saying that ‘in reality one level may not necessarily lead to the next level’ (2002:18), although as Arnstein pointed out, ‘in the real world of people and programs there might be 150 rungs with less sharp and ‘pure’ distinctions among them’. She has always maintained that the ladder model should be viewed as a ‘simplification’ since it does not take into account other more significant obstacles to genuine participation. Arnstein identified these obstacles as paternalism and opposition to power sharing on the part of the ‘powerholders’, and ‘futility, alienation and distrust’ and a lack of resources on the part of the ‘have-nots’ (1969, web document:2.1).

A further criticism of Hart’s model is that it could be interpreted as suggesting that children need to work their way upwards, graduating from one level to the next. Indeed, Howe and Covell describe how the ladder illustrates the ‘evolving participation of child citizens’, explaining that ‘in relation to their age and maturity, as child citizens move up the ladder, their views are given more weight and increasing room is made for their self-direction and initiative’ (2005:70). Invoking the UNCRC’s use of the phrases ‘the evolving capacities’ (Articles 5 and 14) and ‘the age and maturity’ (Article 12) of the child, they consider the ladder to be ‘consistent with the UNCRC’. Similarly, John makes the

observation that ‘the child, with various assistance from the adult, is ‘empowered’ to move up the rungs towards mainstream society and mainstream citizenship’ (1996:15). She maintains that Hart’s ladder models the bestowing of rights to the powerless and passive child by powerful (adults), a model of rights she considers out of date. Although she does not propose an alternative, John argues that what is needed is a more ‘dynamic’ model which ‘encompasses the construction of creative alliances’ with adults (1996:19).

These interpretations of the model appear to ignore Hart’s argument that a child’s evolving capacities to participate should not be thought of as ‘a simple step-by-step unfolding of individual abilities’ but, rather, as a model of ‘what a child might be able to achieve in collaboration with other children and with supporting adults’ (1992:37). He stresses the need for adults to make the most of opportunities for children to demonstrate their competencies. Hart’s interpretation clearly reflects Lansdown’s (2004) contention that adults should take responsibility for the exercise of the rights detailed in the Convention (in this context, the right to participate), rather than merely demonstrate respect for them. This should be influenced by ‘the evolving capacities of the child’ as all children, irrespective of their competencies, are entitled to exercise those rights and adults, therefore, should ensure that they can do so.

A further criticism of Hart’s ladder is that its structure implies a hierarchy against which J. Hart *et al* (2004) consider participatory activities might be unfairly and misleadingly judged. This is clearly problematic, as they reasonably argue, because each project is likely to pose its own challenges. They point out, for example, that where projects are initiated by children, their safety and well-being might be at risk. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the levels of adult-child interaction which are acceptable to different communities. To ignore the cultural contexts of particular initiatives would, they say, be ‘highly irresponsible’. Treseder supports this argument. In his ‘Degrees of participation’

typology, the five ‘top’ levels from Hart’s ladder are arranged in a circle to indicate that they are ‘different, but equal, forms of good practice’ (1997:7).

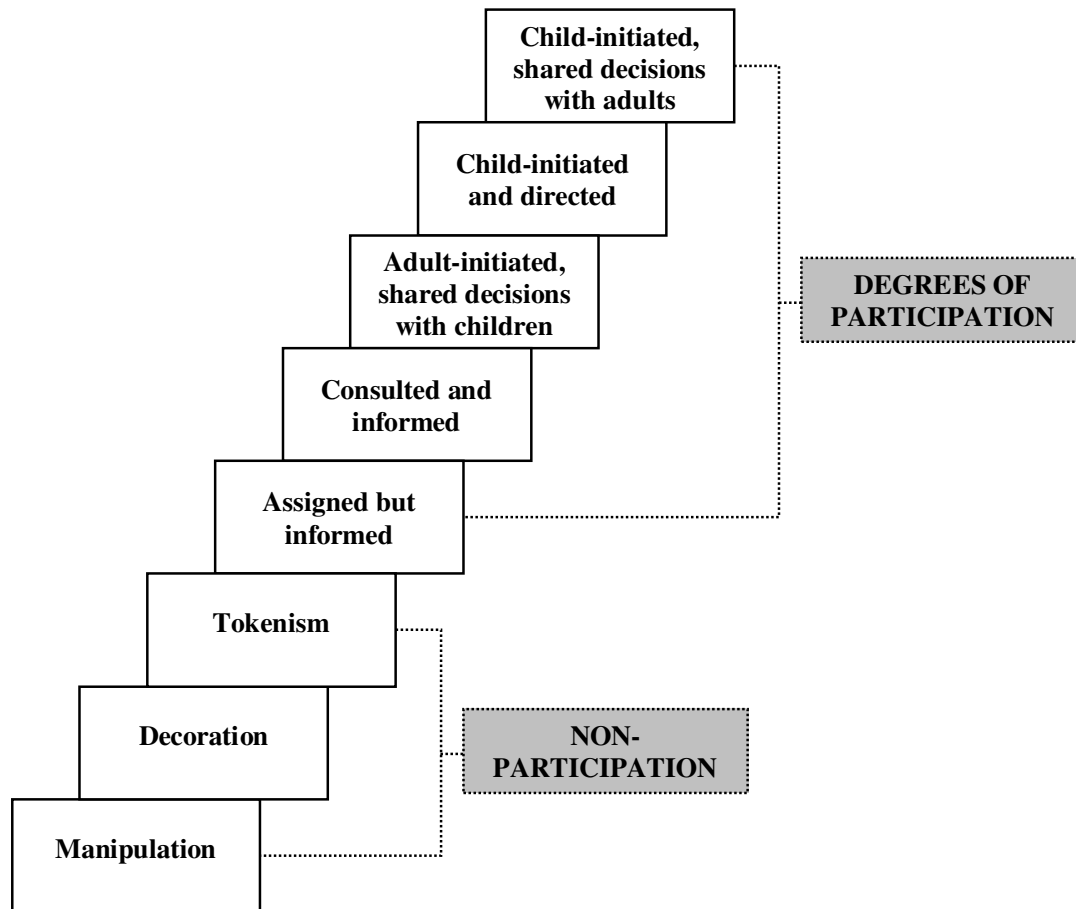


FIGURE 2.1 (Adapted from) Hart’s ‘Ladder of Participation’ (1992:9)

However, both J. Hart *et al*’s (2004) and Howe and Covell’s (2005) objections highlight the dangers involved when much cited typologies are in circulation long after they are originally published, are read outside the context of their original publication and are divorced from original explanations. Close reading of Hart (1992) makes plain that children are likely to work at different levels, at different times and on different projects. He states that while the three lower levels of his model should be avoided, the top ‘rung’ is not always appropriate either and, therefore, may not be the aim of all children’s participatory activities. Furthermore, he discusses how levels of participation will vary ‘not only with a child’s developing motivation and capacities, but also according to the

particular family and cultural context' (1992:5). He warns of the need to consider the possible effects of a child's empowerment on relationships within her or his family. The ladder, he explains, is 'a beginning typology for thinking about children's participation in projects' and should not be used 'as a simple measuring stick of the quality of any programme' (1992:8,12). Miller's suggestion (1997) that adult workers should aim for the highest possible level of participation for children, taking into account the child or children concerned, the setting and the nature of the proposed activities, summarises succinctly and appositely the arguments highlighted above.

Shier acknowledges Hart's model as 'uniquely influential' but offers an alternative model, not as a replacement but as an 'additional tool for practitioners' (2001:108,109). His 'Pathways to participation' model (2001:111; Figure 2.2) has no place for Hart's three lowermost rungs although, interestingly, he asserts that many practitioners have found these to be as useful as the remaining five in helping to eliminate poor practice. Shier focuses more explicitly on adults' roles rather than on the status of children within projects. From the lowest level (children are listened to) to the highest (children share power and responsibility for decision making), Shier posits questions in terms of openings, opportunities and obligations which practitioners or organizations might ask themselves when planning or evaluating participatory projects. Consequent answers can help workers to assess their current approach and identify steps that might be taken to improve levels of participation. Thus, this model clarifies 'degrees of commitment to the process of empowerment' (2001:111).

The emphasis on the levels that can be achieved when adults and children interact highlights a further difference between Shier's model and Hart's since at the top level of the former, children share power and responsibility for decision-making. Shier does not intend this as a criticism of Hart's ladder although Hart does explain that projects that fit into his 'top' level of 'child initiated, shared decisions with adults' are rare. They are not,

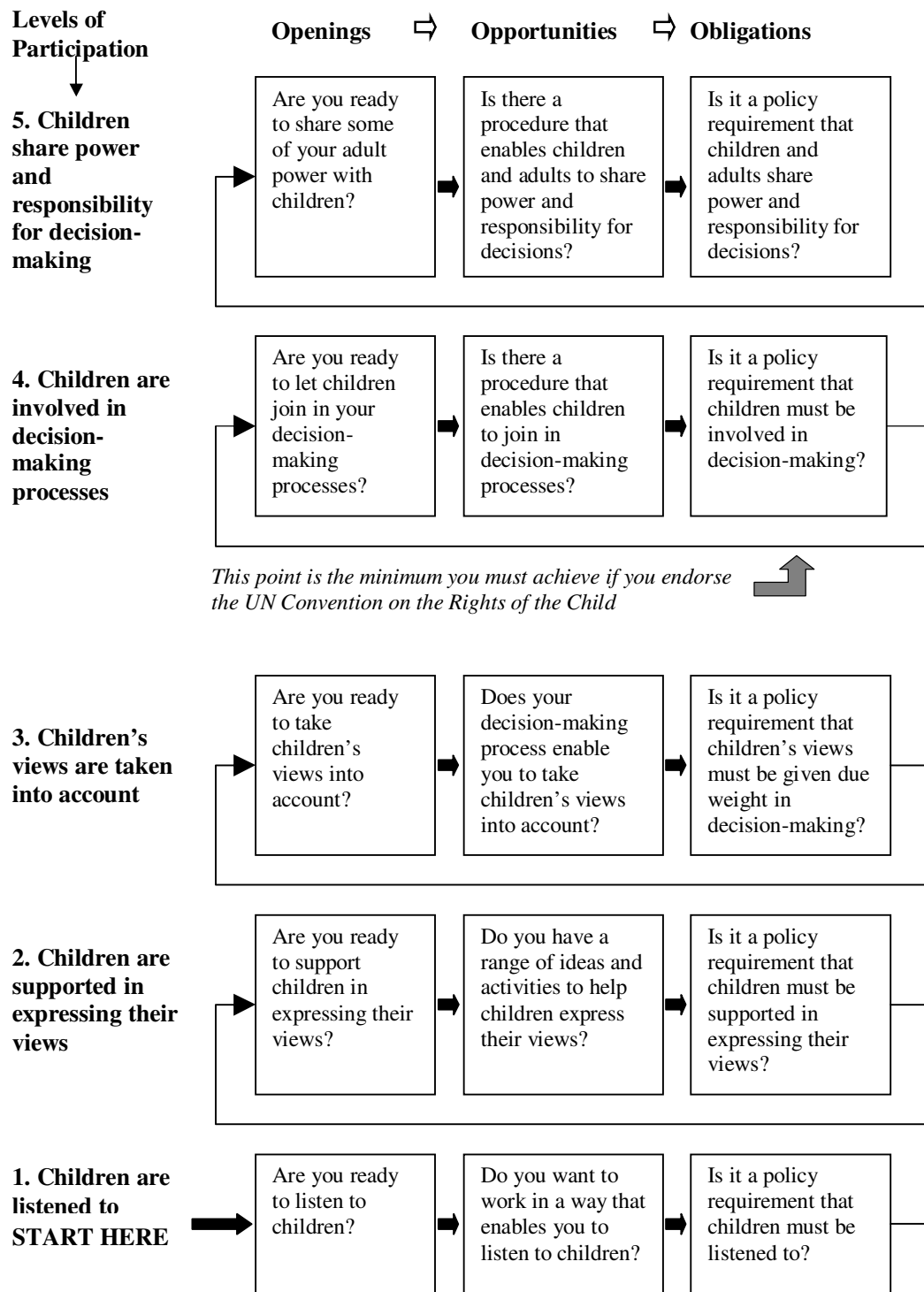


FIGURE 2.2 (Adapted from) Shier's 'Pathways to Participation' (2001:111)

Hart says, intended to be completely independent since they depend for their success upon sensitive and responsive adults who are able to prioritise the interests and initiatives of children and young people.

Kirby and Gibbs take both these models to task for suggesting that ‘each participation initiative or task can be assigned one level of participation’ since ‘in reality, however, levels of decision making power constantly shift within projects and within tasks’ (2006:211). In fact, Shier pre-empts this accusation. He describes how practitioners are unlikely to be able to position themselves at a particular point on his illustration. They are, he explains likely to be ‘at different stages at different levels’ and ‘at different positions in respect of different tasks or aspects of their work’ (2001:110). Similarly, Lansdown argues that the boundaries between different approaches are rarely ‘clear cut’ and are ‘far from being mutually exclusive’ (2001:16).

One argument which might more fairly be directed at Hart’s model is Kirby and Gibbs’ criticism that it explains neither how adults need to support children in participation work nor ‘how children make decisions and take action’ (2006:211). Neither does it help practitioners to understand the different levels of empowerment which children might experience, something which Sinclair (2004) and Badham (2004) identify as important. Shier’s model, by posing evaluative questions for adults to ask themselves, at least encourages the reflective approach which Kirby and Gibbs recommend although it still fails to explain the active role that children might play. The suggestion that ‘the most appropriate levels of adult support’ might be determined by adults engaging in authentic dialogues with children (Kirby and Gibbs, 2006:209) seems likely to lead to adults being better able to help children develop their skills. It is reasonable, therefore, to suggest that Shier’s ‘pathways’ model offers an appropriate set of guidelines as to how this can be achieved.

2.2.4 The purposes and outcomes of children’s participation

Although the UNCRC (in particular, Article 12) has asserted the right of children to participate in matters which affect them, it has not made it an obligation (Lansdown, 2001). Nonetheless, the discussion above suggests that, despite this, participatory

initiatives often extend beyond the level required by the UNCRC in the degree of participation they offer. Referring to Shier's model, for example, the mandatory level is only the third step of the five he suggests, i.e., *children's views are taken into account*. This section considers how different perceptions of the purposes and outcomes of children's participation are likely to cause confusion over what this involves.

When it comes to engaging in participatory activities, Sinclair (2004) considers that Shier's model has something useful to offer practitioners and organisations. It can, she argues, help them to clarify their purpose by responding to the questions it poses. An inherent danger of adopting Shier's model would seem to be that practitioners might see the aims of projects only in terms of meeting obligations. Shier (2001), however, focuses instead on purpose in terms of outcomes for the children and young people concerned. He considers, for example, that while improved service provision might be an outcome of participation at the first two levels of his model, others, including increased self-esteem, an increased sense of ownership and belonging and increased empathy and responsibility can only be engendered by active participation at the higher levels. These seemingly disparate purposes are not necessarily unrelated. For example, the two key principles informing the work of the National Youth Agency in promoting the participation of children and young people in local and national democracy are expressed as 'firstly [...] children and young people have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously through a process of dialogue; and secondly that this dialogue should lead to tangible change' (NYA, 2005). Here, promoting participation can be seen to encompass both purpose and outcome.

It is too early to assess the impact of the requirement of the recent Education and Skills Act 2008 for school governing bodies to invite the views of pupils about prescribed matters (i.e., matters prescribed by the Secretary of State). As Kelley asserts, listening to children's views is not the same as 'involving them as partners' (2006:37) in policy formation, as children's views are often ignored. What is key here, according to Kelley, is that 'we are

encouraged to perceive [the drive towards involving children in policy initiatives] as evidence of a participatory democratic process' (2006:37). Similarly, Badham views 'user involvement' in policy initiatives as a 'smokescreen' (2004b:146). These authors reinforce Arnstein's original warning concerning the dangers of participation as merely a 'window dressing ritual' and her view that when this is the underlying motivation, all that can be said is that people 'have participated in participation. And what powerholders achieve is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions' (1969, 3.4, web document). Thus, although Cavet and Sloper identify a 'sustained commitment in government policy to the principle of children's and young people's participation in public decision-making' (2004:614), they acknowledge the need for research focusing on the extent and outcomes of such involvement.

Sinclair (2004) calls for honesty with children and young people about the purposes and realities of participation activities and the potential of their voices to influence change. Although such activities might be seen by organisations as the means by which they might fulfil their legal responsibilities, Sinclair warns that the often passive role of children in participating is unlikely to lead to children believing that their contributions will have a real impact on decision-making. Consequently, she envisages, the current 'wave of participation activity' is likely to be followed by a 'wave of disillusionment' (2004:113) among children and young people. Jans (2004) adds that, while the input of a variety of social actors, including children, can increase creativity when seeking solutions, authorities may promote participation as a way of controlling conflicts of interest (see also Prout, 2000; Badham, 2004; Clark and Percy-Smith, 2006). Jans suggests that participation for children is a potentially 'artificial training room' (2004:39) in which their lack of political rights and the modern idea of protection mean that they are prevented from fully participating.

This is important when one considers that one of the outcomes claimed for children and young people's participation is improved citizenship (Sinclair, 2004). Shier describes (but does not question) claims made by others that participation '[lays] the groundwork for citizenship and democratic participation', helping to 'safeguard and strengthen democracy' (2001:114). In the context of this thesis this is, therefore, an apposite point at which to examine schools as democratic environments for children's participation.

2.2.5 English primary schools as democratic environments for children's participation

Active citizenship for children can be realised only if they are given opportunities to experience and understand how democratic systems work (Howard and Gill, 2000; Cleaver and Nelson, 2006). Schools, therefore, need to develop an ethos and environment which can support children's active practice in the principles of democracy (see, for example, Howard and Gill, 2000; Griffiths, 2006). Such an ethos will not only respect children's right to a 'voice' but also fulfil the requirement of Article 29 of the UNCRC for schools to prepare children for 'responsible life in a free society'. The Government briefing *Promoting Children and Young People's Participation* (HDA, 2004) appears to support this vision. It states that the Citizenship curriculum in schools 'recognizes the importance of learning the 'skills of participation and responsible action' and that 'citizenship and democracy is (*sic*) best learnt experientially, by living in a culture where it (*sic*) is seen as part of everyday life, not as an optional extra which does not create real change' (HDA, 2004:9). However, the conflation of 'citizenship' and 'democracy' evident here is curious. Schools cannot assume that, because they make provision for pupils to take part in participative activities, they satisfy the demand for pupils to experience both citizenship and democracy since these are not the same thing.

Osler and Starkey attest to the widespread argument that schools are generally authoritarian and thus 'incompatible with effective citizenship education' (2006:445; see also Gallagher, 2006b). Government guidance for Citizenship education in schools (DfES,

2002b) which acknowledges that change might be needed in order to adopt a whole-school approach seems, at first, encouraging. Closer inspection, however, reveals that suggested changes are restricted to pragmatic issues of staffing and timetabling and the development of systems for assessment, recording and monitoring. Thus, as Devine (2003) and Howe and Covell (2005) argue, the recognition of children's rights and their consequent empowerment do not necessarily go hand in hand with Citizenship education. While participation is seen as a crucial element of citizenship, as Hart (2009) surmises, there has apparently been little progress in initiating participatory engagements between children and adults in institutional settings such as schools.

A vision of democratic schooling and student empowerment has rarely informed the aims of school 'improvement'; this has more usually focussed on attainment and longer-term achievement (MacBeath, 2004). Indeed, John questions whether Government rhetoric can 'change the political realities in children's lives' (2003:213), a view supported by Rudduck and Fielding (2006). Along with Leitch and Mitchell (2007) who argue that pupil consultation initiatives are not consciously driven by legal imperatives associated with children's rights, Rudduck and Fielding point out that the democratisation of schools does not seem to have been the motivation behind the increase of pupil voice and participation initiatives in schools.

As the discussion above indicates, while some see schools and schooling as having the potential to provide ideal environments in which children might learn the skills of democratic participation (for example, Hart, 1992; Howard and Gill, 2000; John, 2003; Cleaver and Nelson, 2006), others question whether this role can ever be fulfilled while roles, relationships and identities within schools render them as essentially anti-democratic institutions that deny children a genuine 'voice' (Osler and Starkey, 2006; Wyness, 2006a; Maitles and Deuchar, 2006; Cockburn, 2007; Leitch and Mitchell, 2007; MacBeath, 2009). Pupils can, however, experience what it is to be a citizen within the school community

without that community providing a model of democratic practice. As John warns, pupils are not ‘waiting and watching’ in preparation for the future: ‘they are learning from the treatment meted out to them - learning whether or not their voice counts and by implication what their worth is’ (2003:202). Concomitantly, there is a difference between being educated for citizenship and being educated in citizenship, (Griffiths, cited in John, 2003:215, emphasis in original; Franklin, 2002). The values of rights and democracy can be taught successfully only if they are experienced through actual practice and not through abstract theory (Alderson, 2000a; Wyness 2003; Dobozy, 2007). When this does not happen, tension arises between what schools teach and what they practise, leading to scepticism and disaffection among pupils (Osler and Starkey, 1998; Scott, 2002; Howe and Covell, 2005).

The crucial elements of more deliberative and participatory models of democratic practice have been identified by Pearl (1997), Beane and Apple (1999), Young (2000) and Osler and Starkey (2006) as opportunities for pupils to interrogate their experiences and understandings. Such opportunities include: access to and sharing of knowledge and information; trust in individual and collective capacity for reasoning, debate and problem-solving; inclusion and equality of opportunities and encouragement to participate in decision-making as an outcome of critical reflection and analysis; respect for others and concern for their rights of expression, privacy, dignity and welfare; openness to others’ interests and beliefs and their transformative potential, and the organization of schools to promote and extend these through daily life.

Facilitating such conditions is likely to pose a considerable challenge to schools (Power *et al*, 2001; Johnson, 2004; Flynn, 2007). However, risk-taking by school staff is seen to be essential to facilitating democratic participation (MacBeath, 2004; McMahon and Portelli, 2004). This is not only because school leaders and staff need to examine their own normative assumptions about authority and institutional practices that have previously

gone unchallenged, but also because it is likely to lead to pupils questioning them (Osler and Starkey, 1998; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Wyness dismisses the association of democracy in schools with loss of control and challenges to authority as a 'crude stereotype' (2003:226). Nevertheless, together with a fear of personal criticism, this is a cause of widespread anxiety (Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Perhaps this is unsurprising as teachers feel their professional autonomy is already threatened by the plethora of curriculum initiatives and national strategies which have been introduced (Scott, 2002). As Scott and Apple and Beane (1999) argue, it is not only pupils who experience schools as undemocratic.

These concerns, however, are less to do with handing over power than with examining how power is exercised (Devine, 2003). Power relationships can be transformed to create beneficial environments for pupils and staff alike so that all can be active in democratizing their schools (Johnson, 2004). From their investigations in schools, Rudduck and Flutter have found that, far from having anarchic ambitions, pupils are generally accepting of school organization and practices. In relation to teaching and learning, their views have frequently been shown to concur with those of their teachers (Flutter, 2006) while other interests have been shown to lie primarily in opportunities for choice and dialogue and for encouraging a sense of belonging (Alderson, 2000a; Lynch and Lodge, 2002).

Creating democratic environments requires pupils, too, to take risks. They need to know that they can participate, that they can make their views known and that diverse views will be respected without fear of punishment (Scott, 2002; Wyness, 2003; Arnot and Reay, 2004; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). If schools are not able to create spaces where pupils and staff build relationships based on mutual trust and respect, pupil and teacher voices are likely to remain silenced (Ranson, 2000; Griffiths, 2006; Cockburn, 2007). The confident expression of personal views is not, however, key to this process. As Young (1989), Ranson (2000) and Power *et al* (2001) reason, it is willingness, in the course of shared

interaction, to consider and have regard for the interests of other individuals and other groups that is crucial. An emphasis on participation as something in which ‘children need less support as they get older’ (DfES, 2002b:2) denies its essentially interactive nature. Democratic school environments are not built solely on ‘techniques, strategies or behaviour’ but, rather, ‘engender personal empowerment and personal and social transformation guided by principles of equity, social justice and inclusion’ (McMahon and Portelli, 2004:72).

Such transformations however, require time, commitment and flexibility (Devine, 2003; John, 2003; Maitles and Deuchar, 2006). It is likely, therefore, that in the present climate of testing and accountability, schools may find these issues problematic (Scott, 2002; Hill *et al*, 2004; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). Moreover, as Shultz and Cook-Sather argue, processes in which students are ‘categorised, compared to and judged against each other’ are not compatible with creating a more democratic environment in schools (quoted in Rudduck and Fielding, 2006:224; see also Pearl, 1997; MacBeath, 2009).

Many schools have introduced school councils as arenas for democratic participation. However, motivations for their establishment do not always include improving schools as democratic environments in which pupils can engage in active citizenship and, therefore, their role needs to be examined carefully. This is done in the following section.

2.2.6 School Councils

School councils are ‘an elected body of pupils whose purpose is to represent their classes and to be a forum for active and constructive pupil input into the daily life of the school community’ (School Councils UK, 2005). They are also the most frequently cited demonstrations of supposedly democratic and participatory processes in schools that allow children to have a ‘voice’ and exercise their democratic rights as citizens of their school community.

However, probing the literature exposes the frequent assumption that democracy is a given where school councils are present, revealing a worrying lack of critical reflection regarding their purposes, structures and operation. Adonis, for example, declares that the existence of school councils provides ‘an environment where democratic engagement is the norm’ (2007:9). Similarly, Alderson maintains that ‘only councils provide a formal, democratic, transparent, accountable, whole-school policy forum’ (2000a:124) and that the presence of a school council is ‘an indicator of democracy within a school’ (1999a:3).

Following on from the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (DfES, 2005a), the Whitty report (Whitty and Wisby, 2007a) was commissioned by the DfES with a particular focus on the potential of school councils to function as a means for encouraging pupil voice and involving pupils in decision making. The report identifies the need for schools to have a clear rationale for introducing provision for pupil voice as key to the success of school councils. Their findings indicate, however, that meeting the requirements of the Citizenship curriculum is the most common driver behind their implementation. Few schools identified more active and participatory forms of citizenship as an influencing factor. Fewer still identified the children’s rights agenda as motivating in this respect. The Citizenship curriculum is also identified as the main impetus by NfER-sponsored research into school councils (Taylor with Johnson, 2002) and by School Councils UK (2005). Rudduck and Fielding highlight the danger that such ‘rapid popularisation’ is likely to lead to ‘surface compliance’ (2006: 219) with schools grasping at guidance on how to implement councils without critically examining their own rationale.

While school councils might indeed demonstrate how ‘democratic structures and processes’ can work (DfEE, 1999:5), their very nature prevents them from being a means by which all pupils can participate equally in the governance of their schools and develop associated communication and interpersonal skills. Class representatives, whether elected by their peers or (more problematically) selected by their teachers tend to be ‘the usual

suspects' (Thomas and Crowley, 2006:177): those who are confident, compliant, literate and articulate (see also Holdsworth, 2000; Arnot and Reay, 2004; Howe and Covell, 2005; Davies *et al*, 2006; Tisdall *et al*, 2008). Pupils themselves recognise the qualities which are seen as desirable and understand why they might or might not be chosen (Cox and Robinson-Pant 2005). As Pearl argues, 'the attribution of deficits is a crucial determining factor in deciding who will be afforded rights' (1997:221). Those with 'cultural capital' are more likely to be selected for this privilege.

Pupils are aware of the existing hierarchies which exist within their peer group (Arnot and Reay, 2006). These seem likely to be reinforced if, as Cox and Robinson-Pant (2005) have found, new power relationships result from school councils' representative structures leading individuals to feel marginalised by the process of relying on others to voice their interests. Indeed, Pedder and McIntyre (2006) highlight a lack of shared agendas not only between less engaged pupils and their teachers but also between disparate groups of pupils. Where small numbers represent the majority, it is not surprising that many pupils feel their interests are likely to be ignored (Holdsworth, 2000).

Cockburn (2007) argues that successful spaces for children's participation are created when adults and children are able to change the ways in which they communicate so that the interests of different groups can be expressed. Within these spaces, flexibility allows existing hierarchical divisions to be challenged. This accords with the work of Cox and Robinson-Pant (2005, 2006) who draw attention to the tendency for school council meetings to adopt literacy based practices, with written agendas and minutes and spoken representations that favour the articulate, the more able and, significantly, the adult. They have shown that more visual and tangible representations of peer views, which do not rely solely on talk, facilitate the recording of different views in class forums and thus fairer communication by class representatives. Not only does this lead to more open and democratic decision-making but it also prompts more equal participation during council

meetings, especially for younger children. Although Mitra (2006) rightly asserts that pupils' perspectives on their schools and school experiences are unique, Mannion and I'Anson argue that children's voices alone 'provide only a partial perspective on experiences that have intergenerational and spatial dimensions' (2004:315). Reasoning that it is the relationships between adults and children that create the spaces within which they operate, they highlight the need for 'a more dialogical view' (2004:315). With this in mind, it seems prudent to suggest that facilitating changes in the ways pupils can communicate their views is unlikely to be sufficient. Adults, too, need to be prepared to confront their existing practices.

Council agendas are often decided by adults and restricted to topics that do not challenge the status quo by relating to teaching, learning, relationships and the curriculum (Holdsworth, 2000; Howe and Covell, 2005). Indeed, Whitty and Wisby report schools councils to be 'almost universally concerned with 'toilets and chips' issues' (2007b:312). However, even when pupils decide and prioritise agenda items, the physical school environment, uniforms and lunch/playtimes dominate (Taylor with Johnson, 2002; Wyness, 2003). Wyness (2003) states that this is likely to be due to the importance of social issues to pupils and to pupils' desire for quality and justice in school. Poor physical facilities, for example, are felt by pupils to be offensive and disrespectful (Riley, 2004). Also, Wyness (2003) reports that pupils are likely to focus on social issues because these are areas in which they feel themselves to be knowledgeable and that social issues are those where pupils feel they might be able to make most impact. The suggestion that pupils might feel uncomfortable about raising what are felt to be more radical issues relating to teaching and learning has been made by many (see, for example, McIntyre, 2004; Fielding, 2006, 2004b; Whitty and Wisby, 2007a).

Whitty and Wisby urge teachers to overcome their 'fear' (2007a:7) of encouraging pupils to address issues relating to teaching and learning. This is, perhaps, a rather extreme and

sweeping view. Wyness (2003), for example, refutes research which shows that teachers deliberately restrict agenda items. He reports the frustration teachers feel when the issues raised are limited and do not impact directly on their pupils' education. Cox and Robinson-Pant (2005) confirm these findings but add a cautionary note that tension exists between the issues which pupils identify and what is realistic in terms of what can be changed. Lack of action on anything other than minor matters and the avoidance of reasons for this are reported as generally problematic no matter what the issue (Wyse, 2001; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). This is attributed to lack of access for pupils, despite the existence of a school council, to forums in school where major decisions are made (Wyse, 2001; Wyness, 2003; Cox and Robinson-Pant, 2006).

Whitty and Wisby (2007a) recommend that the Government encourage all maintained primary schools to have a school council (as they are required by law to do in Wales). However, Leitch and Mitchell argue that 'the premature creation of mechanisms and structures (e.g., school councils) can easily obscure the gulf in trust between students and staff that actually exists' (2007:69): 'encouraging these shifts by law is one thing', they assert; 'changing the culture in schools is another' (2007:53). Until pupils can trust that their interests in all matters pertaining to their experiences in school will be respected, that discussion can be open and honest and that their opinions have influence (Flutter, 2006), the status of school councils as a genuine forum for participation and joint decision-making rather than as a forum for complaints (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004) is unlikely to change. As Young remarks, gaining a presence can, through the practices of those 'more powerful in the process', result in a new 'internal' form of exclusion (2000:55).

2.2.7 Towards the future

Thus far, evidence for claims regarding the outcomes of children's participation is lacking. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the upsurge in participatory activities is, as has been seen, relatively recent. On a more positive note, Thomas and Crowley conjecture

that putting children ‘at the centre as active participants’ during decision-making processes would not only be a move towards active citizenship but, importantly, would also replace the vision of children as ‘needy’ with one of children as ‘resourceful’ (2006:177).

Clearly there will be differences between outcomes for organizations and adults and outcomes for children, reflecting, perhaps, differences in priorities and agendas and these cannot be divorced from the contexts in which participation occurs (McNeish and Newman, 2002). Thomas helpfully distinguishes between participation seen as ‘social relations’ and participation seen as ‘political relations’:

There is a discourse of children's participation that is predominantly social – that speaks of networks, of inclusion, of adult-child relations, and of the opportunities for social connection that participatory practice can create. Alongside this there is an alternative discourse that is more or less overtly political – that speaks of power and challenge and change (2007:206).

This is not to say, as Thomas explains, that participatory practice falls into one camp or the other since the same participatory event might be viewed from both standpoints. Nevertheless, it is clear that expectations, certainly in terms of outcomes, might be rather different.

Different aspects of self-development are often cited in the literature as important outcomes of participation for children (see, for example, Roche, 1999; Shier, 2001; Sinclair, 2004). Although these are, of course, valuable, their frequent mention serves to highlight (or even conceal) the differences between outcomes for children as individuals and outcomes for children as a social group. Some of these will be difficult to assess in the short-term. Moreover, outcomes are likely to differ in terms of context, influenced by such factors as the social and cultural compositions of groups and access to resources. The lack of evaluation of participatory activities, therefore, and further debate about outcomes for

children and young people are both areas that have been identified as needing attention (Hyder, 2002; Sinclair 2004; Percy-Smith, 2006; Skelton, 2007; Hartas, 2008).

2.2.8 Summary

Writing forty years ago, Arnstein, whose model of citizen participation inspired ensuing typologies, identified the confusion about what participation means as moving ‘between understated euphemisms and exacerbated rhetoric’ (1969, web document:1). The discussion above has described the various factors that have contributed to the variety of interpretations and understandings of what participation for children and young people might involve. Despite the rapid growth of participatory activity in the UK (Thomas, 2007) - or, perhaps, because of it - the same degree of confusion appears to exist today. These difficulties are summarised by Tisdall and Davis who conclude that ‘participation work with children and young people is presently facing hard questions about its translation from principle to effective practice’ (2004:132). This has been shown to present particular difficulties in schools which cannot yet claim to provide democratic environments for the expression of pupil voice despite the introduction of school councils.

As Lansdown has pointed out, Article 12 ‘introduces a radical and profound challenge to traditional attitudes’ (2001:2). This challenge is likely to be exacerbated by the pressures for organizations to comply with the requirements of the UNCRC. However, as Sinclair (2004) makes clear, a child’s right to participate is just that; there is no onus on those who organise initiatives to produce evidence that children’s participation has led to a successful outcome, only that it has occurred, at least at the level at which they ‘are listened to’ (Shier, 2001:111; see also Tisdall *et al*, 2008).

It is worth bearing in mind, at this point, Lansdown’s (2001) observation that children are under no obligation to participate and Stafford *et al*’s (2003) findings that, in fact, not all children want to participate, feeling that this is an adult responsibility. Sinclair concludes that ‘children’s participation has to be by their choice, based on informed consent and

respecting their right not to participate' (2004:111; see also Hart, 1992; Hartas, 2008).

How children could or should participate seems to be one issue which, with their help, could usefully be addressed.

The following section discusses the notion of 'voice' in relation to children, and more specifically to pupils in schools, through an examination of the motivations and purposes of voice initiatives and the difficulties these sometimes encounter.

2.3 Children's Voices

2.3.1 Introduction

Before the 1980s, legislation relating specifically to children aimed to protect them within structures where adults (parents or professionals) had full responsibility for decision-making. Although arenas for listening to children's voices certainly predate the UNCRC (for example, helplines such as ChildLine) (see Toller, 1999), Articles 12 and 13 are seen to create a 'discursive space' for children in which their voices can be heard (Kellett *et al*, 2004b:35).

Interpretations of children's 'voices', however, continue to be problematic. From some viewpoints at least, although the status of the child has changed, current understandings of what 'voice' entails, the reasons it might be sought and the contexts in which children and young people might be able to express their views all influence whether or not their voices are heard and listened to in meaningful ways. Following the focus of this thesis, the emphasis in this chapter is often on 'pupil' or 'student' voice rather than on 'children's' voices more generally although the issues discussed here are not peculiar to schools. As Wyness asserts, when considering participatory initiatives 'schools continue to provide a powerful frame of reference for children in a number of non-school contexts' (2006a:210).

This section begins by looking at various interpretations of voice, thereby highlighting it as a problematic concept. Two models that demonstrate what needs to be taken into consideration when implementing voice initiatives are then examined. This is followed by a discussion of the motivation and purpose of voice initiatives and the conditions necessary for the establishment of discursive spaces for children. Finally, and with a particular emphasis on schools, questions are asked about who can speak and what can be spoken about.

2.3.2 The multiple notions of ‘voice’

Although Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC are almost always cited in relation to the notion of children’s ‘voices’, it is notable that neither uses this term. Tied up in the concepts of the expression of views, of being heard and of imparting information, ‘voice’ functions as ‘strategic shorthand’ (Robinson and Taylor, 2007:6) for those working with children and young people. This notion is, however, open to multiple interpretations and an examination of the literature reveals how these have influenced the great variety of the ‘voice’ work currently in vogue.

According to Leitch *et al* ‘voice is not enough’ (2005:4). They point out that the concepts of ‘the voice of the child’ and ‘pupil voice’ do not adequately convey what is required by Article 12 and are likely to weaken its impact. It is useful to unpick how the notion of ‘voice’ is used and what it might mean beyond its literal sense. As Komulainen claims, it is both a ‘powerful rhetorical device’ and a ‘multidimensional social construction’ (2007:11,13).

One concept of voice implies a passive role for children, as in the oft heard phrase ‘giving children a voice’. This perception of voice as a gift in the power of others to bestow (Lodge, 2005) is implicit in the subtitle of the DfES document *Working Together: Giving Children and Young People a Say* (2004a) and explicit in the document’s recommendations regarding sharing degrees of power and control with children (see, for example, DfES, 2004a:13). Similarly, this stance is revealed by the Government’s assertion that the guidance relates to one of the outcomes set out in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*: surprisingly, this is identified as ‘enjoying and achieving’ rather than ‘making a positive contribution’ (DfES, 2004a:3). This calls into question whether ‘giving children a say’ really does equate with ‘working together’ although a recent update bears a revised title, *Working Together: Listening to the Voices of Children and Young People* (DCSF, 2008a) that suggests a different role for adults. Like *The Children’s Plan* (DCSF,

2007) to which it makes explicit links, this document was produced in response to criticism by the UN Committee (2008). Consequently, there is heavier emphasis on working ‘in partnership with children and young people’ and children ‘making a positive contribution’ (DCSF, 2008a:5, emphasis in original).

Adult control is also implicated when children and young people are given a voice through their views being ‘allowed [...] to emerge’ (Hamill and Boyd, 2002:116). From these standpoints, adults control whether children are ‘given’ a voice and, again, by implication, whether that voice is listened to. The notion of ‘bringing [children] to voice’ (Thorne, 2002:251) is equally problematic. Thorne attends to critical accounts of the ways in which children have been silenced historically in the writings of sociologists, historians and anthropologists. Hendrick confirms that children (historically and in the present-day) lack an ‘authorial voice’ (2000:43) with which adult accounts might be challenged. He asserts that children’s perspectives will continue to be ‘muffled’ if they are heard only through adult conversations and actions. Similarly, Thorne states that ‘voice’ is ‘a metaphor for political recognition, self-determination and full presence in knowledge’ (2002:251): it is the right to speak and to be listened to.

Both Sinclair Taylor (2000) and Clark (2005) draw attention to other possible dangers of the misuse of terms such as the ‘child’s voice’, ‘pupil voice’ and ‘student voice’, pointing out that it is clear that no one child’s (or pupil’s or student’s) voice can speak for all as this fails to recognise ‘the diversity of voices, experiences and opinions’ (Clark, 2005:500) amongst children. As Thomas explains, ‘members of a group may share a perspective while at the same time having a range of views on what they need or want, and on how to achieve these things’ (2007:210). Similarly, Robinson and Taylor (2007) argue that ‘voice’ conceals the many different ways in which pupils might express themselves through different qualities of speech and different media. However, it should be noted that,

although they cite the UNCRC as a catalyst for ‘student voice’, they fail to mention that Article 13 does, in fact, stipulate the right of children to choose their mode of expression.

These concerns indicate that alternative interpretations of voice need to be considered which involve a more active role for children, for example, voice as individual and as an attempt to communicate meaning. Komulainen, for example, discusses the ‘ambiguities’ involved in communication which arise from the social character of ‘human interaction, discourses and practices’ (2007:13) and which are revealed by voices in the contexts in which they are used. Bakhtin proposed that individual voices are not neutral, being, instead, ‘overpopulated with other people’s voices, and the social practices and contexts they invoke’ (quoted in Maybin, 2001:67). According to Bakhtin, when we use words, we ‘struggle’ to make meaning from their different connotations and associations. Moreover, meaning can be made only through dialogue with an audience, implied or otherwise, so that there is ‘always at least one other respondent voice implicit in any utterance’ (Bakhtin, quoted in Maybin, 2001:69).

Lensmire (1998) contrasts this notion of voice as a ‘struggle’ with conceptions of voice as individual expression and voice as participation. The first of these conceptions sees voice as something that can be found, something static, an endpoint in itself; the second sees voice as a starting point, and, crucially perhaps, ‘a necessary precondition for work to be done’ (1998:268). It is voice as work to be done – voice as ‘project’ (1998:278) – that positions pupil voice as dynamic and in-process. Fielding (2004a) argues that if approaches to student voice are to be truly transformative, the dialogic, active nature of voice should be acknowledged.

2.3.3 Facilitating pupil voice: two models

Lundy’s ‘model of emerging pupil rights’ (shown in Figure 2.4.1) was developed by Lundy during an extended study of pupils’ assessment of their learning (Leitch *et al*, 2005) and is intended to help practitioners consider pupil consultation on assessment within a

rights framework. Adaptations have been made to include the author's explanations of the four interrelated elements of Article 12 and arrows added to indicate the sequence in which Leitch *et al* suggest the elements should be addressed. They consider the model to 'capture the true extent of the UK's obligations to children in terms of educational decision-making' (2005:4) At first glance, the circular nature of the model suggests an ongoing process. There is no suggestion, however, of what might happen after children's voices have been acted on (or not) in terms of evaluation of and reflection on changes to practice (Bucknall, 2009). It could, therefore, be seen as a rather simplistic tool and one which might encourage a 'tick-box' approach to consultation rather than participation.

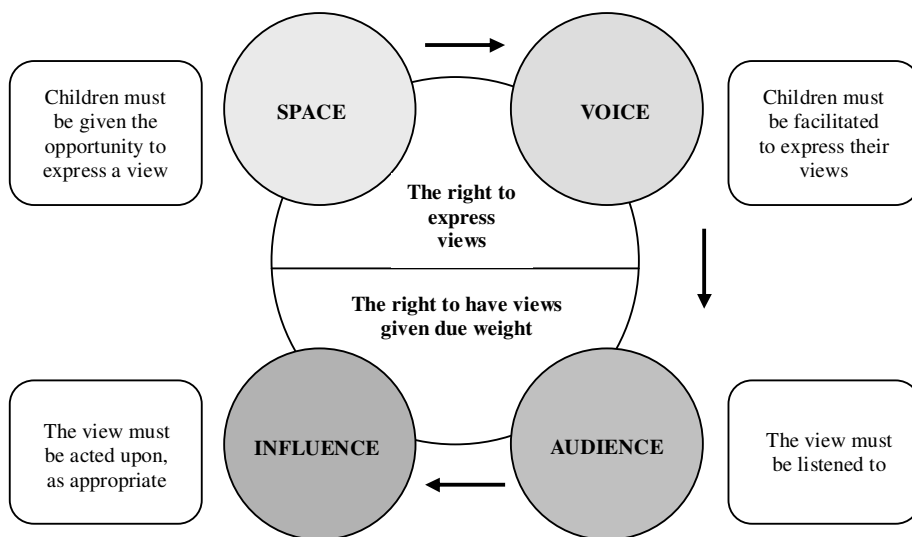


FIGURE 2.3 Lundy's 'Model of emerging pupil rights' (Adapted from Lundy in Leitch *et al*, 2005:4. Arrows have been added to illustrate the 'chronological order' given by the author.)

An alternative model, which includes and adds to the elements identified by Lundy, is the organisational structure devised by Fielding. He drew on some of the many examples of student voice initiatives described in the literature to establish a framework of questions that explore the 'rhetorics and realities' of student voice (2001a:100, Table 2.1). Comprising 'nine interrogative sites', Fielding's framework is considerably more sophisticated than Lundy's as it addresses problematic issues of power and control and

Focus	Questions			
Speaking	Who is allowed to speak?	To whom are they allowed to speak?	What are they allowed to speak about?	What language is encouraged/allowed?
Listening	Who is listening?		Why are they listening?	How are they listening?
Skills	Are the skills of dialogue encouraged and supported through training or other appropriate means?		Are those skills understood, developed and practised within the contexts of democratic values and dispositions?	Are those skills themselves transformed by those values and dispositions?
Attitudes and dispositions	How do those involved regard each other?		To what degree are the principle of equal value and the dispositions of care felt reciprocally and demonstrated through the reality of daily encounter?	
Systems	How often does dialogue and encounter in which student voice is centrally important occur?		Who decides?	How do the systems enshrining the value and necessity of student voice mesh with or relate to other organisational arrangements (particularly those involving adults)?
Organisational culture	Do the cultural norms of the school proclaim the centrality of student voice within the context of education as a shared responsibility and shared achievement?		Do the practices, traditions and routine daily encounters demonstrate values supportive of student voice?	
Space and making of meaning	Where are the public spaces (physical and metaphorical) in which these encounters might talk place?		Who controls them?	What values shape their being and their use?
Action	What action is taken?		Who feels responsible?	What happens if aspirations and good intentions are not realized?
The future	Do we need new structures?		Do we need new ways of relating to each other	

TABLE 2.1. (Adapted from) Fielding's 'Nine Interrogative Sites' (2001a:100)

other issues of a more pragmatic nature. What is notable is that it provides for the potential for the growth and development of student voice – voice as ‘project’ – through

encouraging reflection, not only on the school as a cultural and organisational space and a site of potentially competing discourses, but also (and crucially) on the identification of necessary change. In contrast to Lundy's claims, Fielding argues that 'voice' cannot be separated from spaces, audience and influences as a discrete stage; it is these elements together which produce the voices which might be heard.

2.3.4. Motivation and purpose for 'voice' initiatives

Coad and Lewis (2004) contend that the concern with hearing children's views has grown to the extent that this process is now seen as essential when child-related research and policy initiatives are carried out. They offer two possible reasons for this. The first involves the understanding that children are now seen as social actors in their own right (James *et al*, 1998) and childhood as a 'conceptually autonomous arena'. The second is concern regarding the adult power-over children that allows adults to control the ways in which children's views are accessed. Coad and Lewis argue that, as children are future adults, and as adults are able to control children, adults control the future. In this case, wielding of adult power is clearly not about empowering children during the process of listening to their views. Drawing on his work with students as researchers, Fielding (2004b) points out that, as the notion of 'voice' remains historically embedded in power relations, the identities of speakers and listeners impact considerably on whether or not their views are given due weight. This concern is implicit in his recent critique of student voice initiatives. He questions whether the increase in these is evidence of 'the emergence of something genuinely new, exciting and emancipatory that builds on a rich tradition of democratic renewal and transformation' or 'the further entrenchment of existing assumptions and intentions using student or pupil voice as an additional mechanism of control' (2001a:100).

Wyness' observation that Article 12 encourages 'top-down control' (2006a:210) is pertinent here. Adults have the power to decide if the child is capable of forming her or his

own views and how much weight can be given to them. Since this mirrors the traditional hierarchical power relationships to be found between adults and children, especially in school, it is not surprising that, for many schools, engaging children's voices in active and meaningful ways (as outlined in Fielding's framework, perhaps) remains a challenge (Leitch and Mitchell, 2007).

Failure to take up the challenge, however, does not always signal resistance to its possibilities. It may simply be that schools do not know where to start and what conditions are necessary for authentic engagement (Leitch and Mitchell, 2007). Much is made of the gap between 'the rhetoric and the reality' of student voice and Leitch and Mitchell helpfully substitute for 'reality', 'a school's readiness for genuine student involvement' (2007:53). Lodge (2005) suggests that different notions of student voice are likely to relate to the purposes for which voice initiatives are set up. She presents a matrix which distinguishes four possible types of student involvement based on the purposes and on the view of children's roles each implies (Figure 2.4). Lodge names the four types as *quality control* (institutional gain/passive); students as a *source of information* (community improvement/passive); *compliance and control* (institutional gain but rights based/active), and *dialogic* (personal and community development/active) (2005:131-134).

Explicit in these descriptions are differences, identified by Rudduck and Flutter during their evaluations of consulting pupils in schools, between 'a quick makeover to meet the requirements of the moment' and the desire and commitment to 'enable a school to move from a learning organization to a learning community' (2004:141). As Lodge and others surmise, unless student voice initiatives move beyond the 'legal imperatives associated with children's rights' (Leitch and Mitchell, 2007:53), pupil voice is unlikely to realise its 'transformative potential' (Fielding, 2004b, 2006; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Bucknall, 2009).

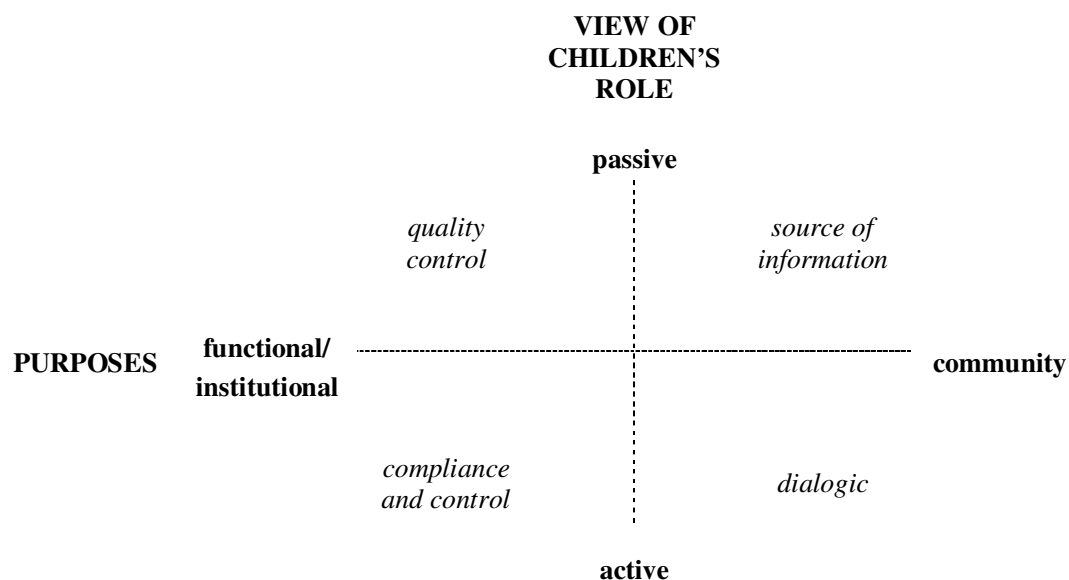


FIGURE 2.4 (Adapted from) Lodge's 'Approaches to student involvement in school improvement' (2005:131)

2.3.5 Discursive spaces for children

According to Hill *et al* (2004), children's voices are frequently still unsought or disregarded in both national and local government processes and in institutions such as schools. They acknowledge, however, evidence that some policy development has been influenced by the UNCRC. Similarly, Fielding offers the Government document *Working together: Giving children and young people a say* (DfES, 2004a; now updated, see DCSF, 2008b) as an example in this respect and sees it (despite some limitations) as an 'important, if rather cautious, symbolic statement' (2004a:199). However, where children's voices are still ignored, and their potential role as active participants is denied them, they remain powerless and invisible in policy decisions. Although Kellett *et al* (2004b) consider Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC to have created discursive spaces for children in which their voices can be heard, Hill and his colleagues point out that this danger remains when adults' eagerness to promote children's views leads them to ignore children's own competencies. They point out that children, through 'less formal processes, structures and

relationships' (2004:84), already have the power to act and already have spaces of their own in which to do this.

The notion of discursive spaces, therefore, needs to be taken into account alongside the notions of physical, social and cultural spaces which, together, create 'children's spaces' (Moss, cited in Hill *et al*, 2004). Lodge (2005) argues that, in these spaces, the roles and relationships of adults and children change in order to facilitate the construction of shared knowledge. Where these spaces are created, both adult and child agendas are considered in ways that acknowledge both adults and children as agentic and interdependent. This shared knowledge relates not only to the focus of the dialogue but also to 'desirable [social and pedagogic] conditions for learning and teaching' through collaboration (2005:137).

Returning to Lensmire's notion of voice as 'project' and to the Bakhtinian concept of 'struggle', the desirable conditions for discursive spaces need to include physical space as well as discursive practices that enable teachers to recognise and support students' struggles for voice: Lensmire writes of helping students to 'transform these struggles into occasions for becoming' (1998:286). Fielding (2004a) draws attention to how schools have traditionally provided separate arenas in which staff and students can meet to discuss their experiences, although for the less powerful party, space is limited since it is controlled by those with more authority. Struggles to be heard are exacerbated by this lack of space where students and staff can meet as equals to share understandings of their experiences in respectful ways, with students sharing in leading the dialogue. Rudduck and Flutter (2006) identify time and the pressures of the curriculum as significant obstacles here although traditional power relationships remain the major concern.

Wyness (2006a) contends that children are unlikely to be able to make their voices heard unless they can take real ownership of spaces for participation. This is rarely possible as these spaces often have political structures imposed upon them that are more familiar to adult forums. Wyness argues that such structures are 'an inappropriate straitjacket for

motivating young people politically' (2006a:216). As he points out, different spaces need to be created which reflect local needs, interests and children's preferred ways of engagement so that children's voices do not become (or, it could be argued, remain) a tool for reinforcing adult regulation. It needs to be borne in mind, therefore, that the nature of spaces created for 'children's voices' is inevitably affected by, and signals, the purpose for seeking them.

2.3.6 Whose voices?

Hendrick (2000) draws attention to the need for children, as social actors with their own standpoints, to challenge the status accorded to adult perspectives on children's lives. Children are aware of the powerful and dominant discourses which are discernible in schools and of the messages about membership which they imply (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). Discourses are not only about 'what can be said and thought but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. [They] embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations' (Ball, quoted in Grace, 1995:26). Children understand which ways of speaking, which meanings and which experiences are the most valued and are likely to find this intimidating (Hendrick, 2000). Also, as Clark (2005) points out, they might try to 'second guess' what adults hope they might say. This is important. If children do not experience themselves as genuine contributors to these discourses, this will inevitably have an adverse impact on their motivation and on whether or not they feel confident to effect change (Taylor *et al*, 2008). For those who are not well equipped to articulate their views in ways that are acceptable, this is a particular danger. As Lensmire writes, 'if student voices have fared relatively badly in schools, certain student voices have fared worse than others' (1998:262, emphasis in original).

Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) concepts of 'cultural capital' and 'habitus' help to explain this. Cultural capital encompasses academic qualifications ('institutional capital'); material

goods ('objectified cultural capital'), and degrees of confidence and self-assurance, forms of social etiquette and competence, particular styles, and modes of presentation, including the use of language ('embodied cultural capital'). Whether or not a student can acquire and internalise cultural capital depends on her or his family being able to pass it down. This, in turn, is to a large extent dependent on social class: the characteristics of cultural capital are usually to be found among upper rather than lower social classes. It is the culture of the dominant class, with its preferred styles, that 'is transmitted and rewarded by the education system' (Dumais, 2002, p44). The notion of 'habitus' is closely related to this and involves a person's understanding of society and their place in it and the behavioural dispositions this understanding encourages (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

The child who possesses the cultural capital and the habitus of the dominant classes is likely to be seen as 'ready' for schooling and is in a good position to claim the membership which Rudduck and Fielding (2006) describe. The child who possesses neither of these is likely to be disadvantaged in relation to the school and educational systems and unable to claim membership in the same way. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) posit that schools contribute to social and cultural reproduction by responding positively to the former, leaving the latter to either withdraw or resist. The habitus of such students is incompatible with the performative climate of schools: they are likely to feel that their cultures and values are ignored or disparaged in their encounters with their teachers and are unable to make sense of their place in the school (Smyth, 2006).

Smyth proposes that pedagogic and leadership approaches are needed which are framed in terms of 'relational reforms' which address the emotional and personal needs of students and which engender confidence, trust and respect. High standards, expectations and accountability would remain important but there would be 'a shift in emphasis of the means for getting there' (2006:296). Such an approach seems to marry with Hendrick's conviction that it is not necessary for children to always speak 'with' the voices of the

dominant discourse; they might, instead, speak ‘through’ it. To recognise this, he explains, ‘is to acknowledge that voices have the potential to impact upon power and make a difference’ (2000:52).

Bragg’s argument that adults in schools need to ‘disrupt their assumptions and habitual ways of working’ (2001:73) echoes that of Smyth. However, although the literature bears witness to the growing number and diversity of student voice initiatives, Bragg confirms that many positive reports ignore the ‘implicit contract’, alluded to above, which students must enter into which requires them to ‘speak responsibly, intelligently and usefully’ (2001:73). Rudduck and Flutter (2004:157) point to language as ‘an arena where principles of inclusion are particularly vulnerable’. In a similar vein, Lensmire writes that ‘student voices are formed within an oppressive society that privileges the meanings, values and stories of some over others’ (1998:270). A consequence of this, he declares, is that while some voices are ‘opened up’, others are ‘shut down’ (1998:285) in the face of the perceived inadequacies of their words and in the face of hostile audiences. Rudduck and Flutter (2004) warn that voice initiatives in schools can sometimes reinforce existing divisive practices in schools rather than open them up to question. The impact of such practices is exacerbated when participating children are seen as privileged, thus creating new hierarchies within the student body. The notion of voice (or, more accurately, the notion of being ‘given a voice’) implies an emancipatory process but it is clear that for some, silence and suppression are the more likely outcomes of both ‘the processes that have silenced them and the struggle they have had to be heard’ (John, 1996:4).

Further problems relate to the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of children’s words. As has been noted, the perspectives of children have historically been filtered through the words and actions of adults (Hendrick, 2000). Such difficulties, Hendrick argues, are not confined to history. As Qvortrup confirms, children ‘have to leave the interpretation of their own lives to another age group, whose interests are potentially at odds with those of

themselves' (quoted in Morrow and Richards, 1996:99). Although this issue is discussed further in Section 2.5, specifically in relation to children's participation in research, it is worth citing Sinclair (2004) here. She makes the important point that this might not be because adults wilfully set out to misrepresent children but because it is difficult for adults to interpret what they say. Both Sinclair (2004) and Clark (2005) argue that it is necessary to develop new ways of being faithful not only to what children say but to what they mean. This important distinction needs to be made more explicit during consideration of voice initiatives so that the possibilities for forums and modes of dissemination, too, are sites for the kind of reflection that Fielding (2001a) deems to be necessary for change to occur.

2.3.7 What can be spoken about?

Fielding draws on a number of examples from his own writings and research in order to recount how the 'reflection, discussion, dialogue and action' involved in 'student voice' usually relate to 'matters that primarily concern students' (2004a:199). For example, in a paper written in 2001, he pointed out that teaching and learning were 'largely forbidden areas of enquiry' with what Lodge (2005) calls 'comfort issues' forming the main focus of enquiry. Topics for student research were identified through 'organisational guidance' and processes of 'self-censorship' on the part of the students (Fielding, 2001a:101). This suggests that, although it is acceptable for children to express their views about break-time and how to improve the playground, for example, teachers and school authorities might not see it as acceptable to invite students to feed their views into staff appraisal. Rudduck and Fielding (2006) argue that students' intimidation by dominant discourses, and their understanding of their place in the school, will inevitably have an impact on what they feel is acceptable for them to talk about. These concerns are mirrored in Devine's study (2003) which demonstrated that, although teachers were aware of changes in the recognition of children as social agents and in the norms of adult-child relationships, such changes were welcomed only in so far as their roles and authority were not questioned.

Hamill & Boyd (2002) point out that tension can arise when what children have to say causes adults to reflect on and question their own practices. Although there has been a proliferation of student voice initiatives recently which seek to address teaching and learning in schools (Rudduck, 2006), Fielding's contention (2001a) that the foci for such projects are often identified by teachers for teachers remains a concern. Recent research reveals that student voice is frequently treated merely as a source of information in order to improve individual and organisational performance rather than a means through which the learning and lives of all those in the school might be improved (Lodge, 2005; Rudduck and Fielding, 2006; Robinson and Taylor, 2007).

Working Together: Giving Children and Young People a Say asks 'What are we consulting about?' (DfES, 2004a:12) with 'teaching and learning' offered as one of several possibilities (although, interestingly, the one specific example given relates to school uniform). However, elsewhere in the document (p.2), this possibility is framed only in terms of students being involved in the 'planning and evaluation of their own learning'. The imbalance of power relations between adults and children is not addressed, as evidenced by the document's failure to be more specific about teaching as a possible area for consultation and, therefore, as an area in which pupils might be interested. This is, perhaps, related to the need emphasised in the document 'to be clear about [...] the boundaries' (p.12). While the 2008 update to this document (DCSF, 2008b) appears rather more promising in that there are no restrictions placed on possible foci for consultation, the need to explain to pupils what is 'out of bounds' remains highlighted.

Consultation, especially in schools, therefore often seems to be limited to what affects children in the context in which their views are sought. It might be useful for schools to take heed of S. Hart's (2002) contention that children can gain considerably from being engaged in conversations about matters which do not directly affect their lives. Through

this, he states, children are able to ‘clarify the reasons for voicing opinions and strengthen judgements about when, where and how to do so’ (2002:254).

2.3.8 Summary

The discussion above has highlighted different interpretations and understandings of ‘voice’, and the different purposes to which it might be applied. Compliance and obligation are seen by Rudduck and Fielding (2006) to be responsible for the increase in popularity of student voice projects. The rapidity with which initiatives have been put into place as a result is a point of concern. Rudduck describes how the proliferation of related advice and publications manifests ‘mile-wide promotion with only inch-thick understanding’ (2006:133). It has been seen that when children’s voices are invoked only as a nod towards Article 12, then children are not likely to be taken seriously as competent social actors and sustainable changes in the ways organizations such as schools structure themselves are unlikely to be made.

As Bragg indicates, when rapid results are needed (and school performativity and accountability are at issue) it is always easier ‘to listen to voices that make immediate sense’ (2001:73). As the views of children who may lack cultural capital and are likely to experience voice initiatives as less than positive also need to be accommodated, it is vital that there is evaluation and reflection on other projects that do successfully motivate these children. Similarly, a critical stance on the purposes and relational aspects of ‘voice’ projects that do not motivate children in this way (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006) is needed. This is likely to indicate a more measured way forward.

The next section of this literature review takes up the issues discussed in the previous sections, focusing on how children’s participation and voice and the status of children, especially in schools, are influenced by the actions of power and how power is implicated in adult-child relationships.

2.4 Children, Power and Empowerment

2.4.1 Introduction

In the preceding sections of this review, mention has been made of the ‘three Ps’ addressed by the UNCRC (1989), i.e., protection, provision and participation. To these, John adds a fourth, stressing that neither the other three nor children’s status in society can be understood without a consideration of what is, in her view, ‘the big P - Power’ (2003:45). This section considers how power might be defined, how it functions and how it is implicated in adult-child relations, especially in schools. It ends by examining how empowering as a process and power exercised differently have the potential to lead to a greater understanding of children’s lives.

2.4.2 Conceptualising power

Hoyle acknowledges both the complexity of power and its disputed nature and makes a distinction between power as ‘ultimately coercive’ authority and as influence (2000:258, emphases in original). The former, linked to hierarchical organizational structure and the right to make decisions, is sustained through the application of sanctions, suggesting that power can be owned or appropriated and applied at will. However, Devine (2002) and Hall (2001), amongst others, draw attention to Foucault’s declaration that power should be viewed not as a negative force but as one which is productive. The interests of Foucault (whose theorisations of power are widely cited in the literature) lie not so much in what power is but in how it works (Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998). He views power, not as a commodity but, rather, as something which ‘is employed and exercised through a net-like organization’ in which individuals ‘are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power’ (Foucault, 1980:98).

However, although Foucault challenges the traditional hierarchical view of power, he acknowledges that it is unevenly distributed (Robinson and Kellett, 2004) unlike Bourdieu who, according to Swartz, argues that ‘hierarchy and domination persist intergenerationally

without powerful resistance and without conscious recognition of their members' (1997:6). Swartz argues, however, that the subordination of particular individuals and groups is not due to lack of awareness but, instead, to a lack of the resources required for change.

Hoyle's definition of power as influence offers a more positive understanding of its mechanisms. Hoyle (2000) describes this as something that is sustained through relationships, dialogue and negotiation between different groups who draw on resources other than authority in the pursuit of common or individual interests. Concepts of power which focus on its potential as capability, manifested in action, and as a means rather than an end in itself (Ashcroft, 1987) are also helpful. These accord with Robinson and Kellett's definition of power as 'the ability of individuals or groups to make their own concerns count' (2004:81). They point out that while power might involve force and resistance, it invariably creates knowledge through the production of ideas. It is not that knowledge is power but rather that power is manifest in the way knowledge is employed and the effects it has in social settings (Popkewitz and Brannen, 1998; Hall, 2001).

2.4.3 The effects of power

Discourses which relate to children as vulnerable and powerless have been challenged by those who acknowledge children's social agency. They have been shown not only to be influenced by the settings in which they find themselves but also, as social actors, to exert influence on them (Devine, 2003; Prout, 2002). Roche (1999) maintains, however, that as children are relatively powerless, they have fewer choices in the ways they can exercise power compared to those who are relatively more powerful. Also, as Robinson and Kellett (2004) point out, those who have more authority are able to exercise power when they suppress knowledge produced through the exercise of power by those with less authority.

In the context of children's participation it seems fashionable to speak of 'power sharing' or of 'handing over' power, a result, perhaps, of notions of power as something which some have and others do not. Recognition of power as action rather than as possession,

especially in relation to children's participation, can lead to a more useful analysis of how it is manifest in the network of relations to which Foucault refers (Gallagher, 2006a). Sullivan and King (1998) describe three manifestations of power: 'power-over', 'power-to' and 'power-with'. Power-over acts between persons and is associated with domination and the exercise of authority; as such, it is seen as negative. In contrast, power-to is positive, enabling and intrapersonal, denoting an individual's belief in their ability to act. It is also a pre-requisite of power-with, also positive but interpersonal. This is exercised where individuals and groups collaborate to meet their mutual wishes and needs and where relations are equal.

In his discussion of Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' (through which groups of people are managed through the exercise of power), Gallagher (2006b) warns against such oppositional models. Actions here cannot be thought of entirely in terms of power-over since 'coercion both requires the complicity of the coerced and is at the same time limited by the extent of this complicity' (2006a:10). Gallagher argues further that institutional structures such as schools can only achieve their objectives with the compliance of those 'agents' who are the subject of management: 'the power of agents and the power of structures [are] entirely co-dependent' (2006a:11).

According to Gallagher, this idea is important when considering children's participation initiatives since these provide examples of 'governmentality' in 'judging how much control to cede to the governed, and determining what kinds of control to give them to make them more willing to be governed' (2006a:11). Nevertheless, in his discussion of intentionality, Gallagher (2006a) cites Foucault's argument that the ways in which power is exercised cannot be assumed to reflect individual or institutional intentions. The exercise of power might have expressed objectives but the effects of those actions cannot be predicted as 'the complexity of the social world means that social actions always have unintended effects' (2006:9). He maintains that an analysis of power requires attention to

the effects of intentions and how they came about rather than attention to who exercised power and what their intentions were.

2.4.4 Power and relationships in school

Discourses relating to children – ‘what we think we know’ - have sustained the view of the child as ‘other’ through what Foucault described as ‘a regime of truth’ (1980:131). In institutional settings such as schools, the application of discourse (knowledge) entails ‘constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practices’. In this way, knowledge embodies power relations (Hall, 2001) and impacts on children’s experiences (see also Moss *et al*, 2000). Recent research shows that not only do children define themselves as subordinate to teachers in terms of status (Devine, 2003; Allan and I’Anson, 2004) but also that they are defined as such (Lynch and Lodge, 2002). Brought about through knowledge and power as ‘truth’, such divisions are deeply entrenched in schools as ‘part of the taken-for-grantedness of institutional life’ (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004:10).

Prout (2001) argues that consideration of policy initiatives would benefit from deeper understanding of how relations in schools operate through a net-like system rather than one that positions children at the bottom of a hierarchy. He emphasises that to ignore children’s roles in this system is to deny the considerable impact they have on life in schools and calls for particular attention to be given to the ‘practices and relationships that can enable or disable the production of voice’ (2001:199; see also Noyes, 2005). Similarly, Devine has shown that children’s perceptions of themselves in school, and how they are caught up in the ‘dynamics of power and control’ (2002:303) which operate there, impact on how they perceive their rights, especially their right to express their concerns and be listened to with respect.

Although Packwood and Turner (2000) perceive the complexity of ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ relationships which constitute schools as denying a strict hierarchy, they make it clear that hierarchies do exist. They discuss how these can limit access to information,

which then, as a restricted resource, becomes a source of power. Consequently, those at the bottom of the hierarchy are likely to feel most disenfranchised in respect of their right to speak. Packwood and Turner, however, are not referring to children in school but to teachers (see also Bragg, 2007c; Gunter and Thomson, 2007). While some (for example, Devine, 2002) focus on the perceived threat that empowering children might hold for teachers' authority and control, it is important to acknowledge that teachers, too, are caught up in the net of relations in school. Lynch and Lodge (2002) report that power as an equality issue is a problem for both pupils and staff (see also Noyes, 2005). It might prove valuable, therefore, to explore how teachers' perceptions that enabling pupils to become more influential in school equates with a lessening of their own authority and control (Devine, 2003; Griffith, cited in John, 2003) relate to perceptions of their own status in terms of power relations.

As Vandenbroek and Bouverne-de-Bie argue cogently, 'dichotomist thinking on power relations between children and adults masks forms of exclusion among children and adults' (2006:130, emphasis in original), especially since dominant discourses tend to construct children as a homogeneous group. Thus, while Moss *et al* contend that dominant discourses 'exclude alternative ways of understanding and interpreting the world' (2000:236), it is not sufficient to view such alternatives as simply those of children. Instead, attention needs to be paid to the 'cacophony of competing voices' (Reay, 2006:179) that are constituted through the power differentials manifest in practices and discourses between peers (see also Devine, 2003). While Lynch and Lodge rightly concern themselves with the lack of particular attention paid to power (and, thus, age-related status) as an 'equality problematic' (2002:10) in schools, it remains important to acknowledge that some children will be marginalised more than others in terms of power and that their voices are likely to be both expressed and heard differently. The equality problematic extends to encompass the (albeit, not unrelated) factors of ability, gender, class and

ethnicity. Noyes (2005) and Whitty and Wisby (2007b) stress the dangers of approaching the notion of pupil 'voice' uncritically where initiatives to promote it are based on over-generalised perceptions of children as powerless. Furthermore, Noyes points out that existing power differentials between pupils are likely to be reinforced by pupil voice initiatives (see also Cox and Robinson-Pant, 2006).

Nevertheless, recognizing, interrogating and taking action to address existing power imbalances would, according to Roche (1999) and John (2003), be a beginning. John argues that this would constitute 'an architecture of empowerment'. Without this, initiatives which set out to afford children's voices remain open to the abuse of power by adults (Willow *et al*, 2004). Rudduck and Flutter (2004), for example, conclude that the empowerment of pupils is rarely the goal of pupil voice initiatives as these are seen as more acceptable when aimed towards raising standards (see also Whitty and Wisby, 2007b).

2.4.5 Conceptualising empowering and empowerment

In an exploration of possible definitions of 'empowering', Ashcroft (1987) challenges the perception of this concept as unsettling and as a threat to the status quo, especially in education. He emphasises that empowering as a process should be the critical focus for attention, as this defines it as 'bringing into a state of ability/capability to act', rather than as a product ('the state of being empowered') (1987:143). Thus, children who are empowered believe in their ability or capability to act and will accompany this belief with able or capable action. Ashcroft proposes, however, that empowerment as a process does not equate with autonomy and its connotations of freedom. Rather, it is compatible with 'enabling', that is, a process through which things can be made possible for children (and others) through the provision of means and opportunities and, importantly, through the belief, and the nurturance of children's belief, in their competence. More specifically, then,

the process of empowering involves belief in others' capabilities and helping them transform their individual competencies to power as action (Ashcroft, 1987).

What empowering does not mean, therefore, is 'taking power from the powerful and giving it to the powerless', a view which Gallagher argues is 'a familiar narrative within accounts of participation' (2006a:5). He contrasts two prevailing models of children's participation and describes both as inadequate. The first, 'the ideal', has as its vision the empowerment of children by setting free their 'subjugated voices'. The second, 'the reality', involves power being 'kept' by adults and not shared with children (2006a:14). It should be noted, however, that although Gallagher compares these two models with the top and bottom of Hart's (1992) 'ladder of children's participation', Hart himself is clear that activities 'at the top' of the ladder (*child-initiated, shared decisions with adults*) are predicated on the support of adults and the negotiation of power and that enabling these activities is far from simple.

Cockburn extends this argument to make the significant point that, since children and adults alike are subject to 'hierarchies of control' (1998:114) there will always be tension between autonomy and interdependence so that total autonomy is not possible for either. Neither is it necessary. Although John (2003) apparently equates power with autonomy and control, she also maintains that when those who are able to exert more influence show willingness to 'share' power, this can lead to positive gains, both for them and for the consequently empowered, in terms of mutual understanding (see also Devine, 2002).

It is clear that the process of empowering cannot be confined to particular events or times: Ashcroft explains how it is either 'conscious, committed and pervasive' or 'ineffectual' (1987:143). Moreover, processes will be disempowering rather than empowering when a person's belief in their capability is threatened when they are prevented from performing a capable action (Ashcroft, 1987). Brunson and Vogt see empowerment as the 'transformation of the self while working within an organisational structure that supports

and encourages that transformation' (1996:73). Like Paz (cited in Sullivan and King, 1998:32), who proposes that individuals and groups can be empowered only when those who are responsible for interventions work with people rather than for them, Brunson and Vogt consider that external constraints inevitably restrict the empowerment of individuals.

Finally, as Popkewitz and Brennan point out, 'the study of the effects of power enables us to focus on the ways that individuals construct boundaries and possibilities' (1998:19). Such boundaries and possibilities are implicit in Sullivan and King's description of 'participative' leadership, where adults are willing to adopt the role of facilitator, working within groups. Similarly, Stone (cited in Duhon-Haynes, 1996) suggests that respect, validation and a focus on success would create a positive foundation for empowering processes. She adds ownership, choice, autonomy in setting goals, decision-making, responsibility, independence, risk-taking, collaboration and self-evaluation as valuable contributing factors.

2.4.6 Summary

Ewald declares that 'we have a responsibility with regard to the way we exercise power: we must not lose the idea that we could exercise it differently' (quoted in Gore 1998:248). It is clear, from the arguments presented in this section, that willingness to consider this is not sufficient without thorough examination of all that is involved in empowering processes. It is not possible to give personal power to children but only to 'nurture and develop' it as 'a present capability' (Ashcroft, 1987:148, emphasis in original) by dismantling potential barriers. Devine emphasises the impact of social structures on the degree to which empowering is possible by asserting that

where adult-child, teacher-pupil relations are framed in terms of voice, belonging and active participation, children will be empowered to define and understand themselves as individuals with the capacity to act and

exercise their voice in a meaningful manner on matters of concern to them

(2002:307).

Empowering processes, in this way, lead to the production of new knowledge and understanding about children's lives (Devine, 2003).

The penultimate section of this literature review examines children's participation in research and how the recent development of children as researchers in their own right (Kellett, 2003, 2005b) can be an empowering process. The section will also attempt to clarify the relationships between this development and the arguments explored thus far.

2.5 Children's Participation in Research

2.5.1 Introduction

The penultimate section of this review discusses the relatively recent development of children as researchers in their own right (Kellett, 2003, 2005b). Initiatives that facilitate children's independent and active research can be seen as contributing to the growing number of voice and participation initiatives. The discussion here situates these initiatives within the debates that have emerged in the preceding sections. It examines the influence of power on research relationships, what is meant by children as active researchers, and children's competencies, both generally and more specifically in relation to participation in the research process. It ends by considering the adult's role in supporting children as researchers.

2.5.2 Power and research relationships

The notion that adults' knowledge of children is superior has been recognised as a factor in sustaining unequal adult-child relations (Robinson and Kellett, 2004). As Hogan (2005) explains, the traditions of developmental psychology and the model of the child as powerless and biologically unreliable have reinforced the notion that children have little to offer researchers, even when the topic of research is children themselves. The adult researcher has thus been seen as the powerful 'expert' (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008). According to Rowe, 'power is the right to have your definition of reality prevail over other people's definition of reality' (quoted in John, 2003:47) and this is precisely how adult researchers exercise power. Despite the potential for change discussed in preceding sections, it is widely argued that such power inequalities in adult-child relationships are difficult to eradicate (see, for example, Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Jones, 2004; Kellett and Ding, 2004).

Christensen and Prout (2002), for example, describe children's participation in research projects as occupying different positions on a passive-active continuum: as *objects* of

research, as *subjects*, as *participants* and as *co-researchers*. While participation at the 'active' end of the continuum appears to challenge traditional adult-child power relationships, Sinclair (2004) calls for honesty in giving young participants a realistic picture of what adults can offer children and young people in the sharing of power. Nevertheless, although concern has been expressed that the need for teacher and school accountability might be the primary reason for seeking the voice of children in school-based research (Fielding, 2001b), there has been a move away from adult-led enquiry towards engaging children more fully in this context (Kirby, 2001).

This is not to say that research on children's lives conducted from adult perspectives is not valuable. As Waksler argues, such studies provide data in their own right as 'studies of adult perspectives' that can 'provide new insights into the ways that adults construct children's social worlds, ways that are often incompatible with children's constructions' (1991a:71). As Fielding (2001b) maintains, adults are guilty of misunderstanding, misrepresenting and sometimes disregarding children's perspectives particularly when these conflict with the researcher's own experiences, interests and interpretations (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008). These may make it difficult for adults to interpret what children are saying (Sinclair, 2004). Furthermore, the use of adult categorisation schemes can result in children having others' representations imposed upon them, with the consequence that children's voices are 'silenced' (Grover, 2004:92). Traditional research epistemologies and methods thus 'fail to capture the voices needed' (Lincoln, quoted in Fielding, 2004b:299).

It has been suggested that the introduction of new participatory research methods is likely to increase the potential for children's voices to be heard (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998a; O'Kane, 2000; Clark, 2004; Jones, 2004) and help to address the ethical implications of unequal power relationships (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Thus, researchers' constructions of images of children 'suffused with the political and social agendas of the

power elite' (Grover, 2004:83) might be avoided. If researchers and other adults are willing to attempt to overcome the adult-centric mentality currently prevalent in child-based research (Jones, 2004), then the lack of children's voices in reports on their lives (Oakley, 2000) can be addressed. As Hendrick warns, however, this is likely to give rise to a 'more authentic but probably unsettling set of voices' (2000:55).

2.5.3 Children as active researchers

Kellett and Ding (2004) argue that the development of new research methods *per se* is not likely to be sufficient in addressing this problem. They maintain that children need to be given a 'primary research voice' (2004:172) so that adults do not always need to interpret and speak on their behalf. Kellett proposes research initiated and carried out by 'children as active researchers' (2005a:2) as a means of improving adult understandings of children and childhood. This, she argues, will not only 'unlock' child voice (2005a:2) but also 'promote children's democratic involvement at all stages of decision making' (forthcoming).

It is important to clarify here what Kellett means by 'active researchers'. Although children are referred to 'as researchers' in many research accounts, this role is open to various interpretations. Where Lansdown describes children's involvement as researchers 'at all levels of the research process' (2004:11), typically the research topics have been decided upon by adults. Leitch *et al*, paradoxically, describe the potential of young people as 'full-blown researchers in their own right' (2007:460) to be involved in planning and carrying out research (emphasis added). Although Alderson (2000b) also uses the term 'active researchers', it is clear from her accounts of research that this sometimes indicates only that children have been active at some point during the research process, as co-researchers (see also Coad and Lewis, 2004; Jones, 2004). Clark *et al* (2001) discuss engaging young people as researchers but account for the 'research team' only in terms of its adult members while Bland and Atweh describe 'students as researchers' to be 'full participants

as co-researchers' (2007:340). Furthermore, Atweh and Burton perceive students as researchers as a 'method of research', a 'technique' (1995:562) to be employed. These last three examples exemplify the imbalances of power that can exist between adults and children in collaborative research.

In marked contrast to these different understandings of 'children as researchers', Kellett (2005a) intends this designation to apply to children who direct their own research from inception to dissemination. Children, she states,

observe with different eyes, ask different questions – they ask questions that adults do not even think of – have different concerns and have immediate access to peer culture where adults are outsiders. The research agendas children prioritise, the research questions they frame and the way in which they collect data are substantially different from adults and all of this can offer valuable insights and original contribution to knowledge (2005b:7).

Kellett (2005b) maintains that the argument for a shift from an adult-centric research process to a research process controlled by children can be compared to the arguments of other groups in society which have traditionally been marginalised. Feminist approaches to research, for example, emphasise reflexive practice which addresses the 'self-presentation' versus 'other-representation' debate (Christensen and James, 2000a:1). This concerns not only women as 'other' to men and children as 'other' to adults, but also ethnic minorities and the disabled. Adults are no more able to orient to children's perspectives than men are able to orient to the perspectives of women or the able-bodied to those of the disabled. As Hendrick concludes in his history of children as social actors, 'standpoint matters' (2000:54).

Although based in secondary rather than primary schools, the 'Students as Researchers' projects reported by Fielding (2001b, 2004b) and Fielding and Bragg (2003) illustrate what

a child-centric model of research can mean for young people. Fielding argues that students tend to see the world of the school differently to the way that adults see it and, even if they identify similar issues as being of particular importance, ‘invariably they will have different understandings of their nature and significance’ (2004b:307). These projects were carried out with students who identified significant issues for research for themselves, although topics were confined to school and learning related issues. ‘Children as active researchers’ initiatives are extremely uncommon in primary schools in the UK (Kellett *et al*, 2004a; Bucknall, 2005). Children do, of course, carry out ‘research’ in primary schools but this is almost always confined to fact-based research and the development of library skills. Where original topics are addressed, children’s roles are most usually restricted to collecting and displaying data, as the practice of these classroom-based skills is valued over and above research activity (Alderson, 2000b).

An emphasis on children being afforded ownership of their own research agendas (Kellett *et al*, 2004a) offers the possibility of children researching significant issues which relate to their lives not only within school but also outside it. As Rudduck and Flutter argue, ‘we cannot – and should not want to – keep the world outside school away from the world inside school’ (2004:7) since children’s perspectives of both can only deepen understanding of their experiences of school. Pupils are primarily children and their lives extend beyond the school gate. Both Lansdown (2005) and Wenger (1998) highlight the need for meaningful learning opportunities which are relevant to children’s lives and which have the potential to make a difference to the communities which children value. Similarly, Hartas proposes that ‘research as a bottom-up activity has the potential to be transformative because it originates within young people’s micro settings’ (2008:167).

Since children construct their own social lives, they, unlike adult researchers, are able to reflect upon what is significant for them about childhood, and what it means to them (France *et al*, 2000). Therefore, children in control of the research process are less likely to

be exploited by adult researchers as a data source that serves adults' own interests and concerns (Clark, 2004). Instead, by having their rights both promoted and protected through carrying out their own active research, children and young people are likely to develop the values and skills of citizenship that will afford them a greater investment and voice in society as social actors (Lloyd-Smith and Tarr, 2000).

Proponents of the 'children as researchers' movement claim that research experience increases the personal development of children in terms of their knowledge, skills and confidence (Kirby, 1999; Sinclair, 2004; Kellett, 2005a; Bucknall, 2005, 2009). In addition, the status of children as a user group whose perspectives can be drawn upon to inform policy and practice is likely to be enhanced by the outcomes of their own enquiry into aspects of their lives which they have identified as important (Alderson, 2001; Coad and Lewis, 2004). Furthermore, Hartas sees this movement as offering a 'reflexive approach to diversity and difference' (2008:18) and, consequently, an appreciation of rights and democracy, as possible outcomes of children's engagement in inquiry as researchers.

2.5.4 Children's competencies

Perceptions of children as incompetent have led to their being deemed incapable of understanding research processes, of making decisions about participating and of providing 'truthful' data about their experiences (Morrow, 2005; Christensen and Prout, 2002). Despite developments in social research which acknowledge child participants as competent social actors (Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-de Bie, 2006), these issues are still seen as barriers to children's participation in research. Moreover, especially since they measure children against the competent adult norm (Lansdown, 2005), these issues act as barriers to research training for children. Although Uprichard argues reasonably that 'children and adults can be competent or incompetent depending on what they are faced with' (2008:305, emphasis added), research methodology has traditionally been considered

too difficult for children to learn and to implement (Kellett, 2005a). This highlights the importance of considering the level of adult involvement necessary or appropriate in projects if children's status as researchers in their own right is to be recognised (Coad and Lewis, 2004; Alderson, 2000b).

However, Alderson (2000b) notes that child co-researchers have displayed levels of competence which have surprised adult researchers. As Kellett argues, the attributes of researchers 'are not synonymous with being an adult' (2005b:9). She points out that it is children's lack of research skills which imposes a barrier to their carrying out research, not their lack of adult status. She proposes that with careful training and the use of innovative approaches, it is possible for young children (and children of different abilities) to become researchers in their own right, referring to several projects successfully carried out and completed by ten-year-old children who have received such supportive training (2003, 2005a; see also Kellett *et al*, 2004a; Bucknall, 2005; Kellett and Dar, 2007). Frost (2007) has facilitated research projects in a comparable way with children up to three years younger. Similarly supported, a group of young people with learning disabilities directed their own three-year research project, WeCan2 (Aoslin *et al*, 2008). Such initiatives should help to address the concerns of the UK Children's Commissioners (2008) about continued resistance to seeking the views of young children and those with disabilities.

These reported experiences of working with young children as researchers further challenge the long-held belief of the child as dependent and incompetent. Originating in the work of developmental psychologists and attributed largely to Piaget, this model rests on an understanding of the development of children's competencies as linked to chronological age (Christensen and Prout, 2005; Hogan 2005). Woodhead (1999), explaining more recent shifts in thinking in developmental psychology, contrasts the idea of cognitive development as a passive and universal staged process with theories which emphasise, instead, the importance of cultural and social factors in effecting this as a

dynamic process. Lansdown (2005) also addresses these issues but focuses, too, on context, on the agency of children in contributing to their own skills development and on the significance of children's interactions with adults. Donaldson's (1978) work challenged the staged theories of Piaget, which arose from subjecting children to experimental conditions, showing that children demonstrate significantly higher levels of competence when performing tasks in contexts which are familiar to them and relevant to their lives. Indeed, Christensen and James argue that

although children may share in a common biology and follow a broadly similar developmental path, their social experiences and their relative competencies as social actors must always be seen as contextualized, rather than determined by the process of physiological and psychological change (2000b:176) .

Vygotsky (1978) argues that participation in joint activity with more knowledgeable adults or peers can support children in developing particular areas of competence through bridging the gap (the 'zone of proximal development', or ZPD) between the child's existing and potential levels of performance. It is the experiences that children meet which will determine their personal trajectories of development and the acquisition of particular competencies. Tharp and Gallimore (1998) cite Vygotsky's assertion that it is only through interaction that developmental processes can be internalised, thus becoming 'part of the child's developmental achievement' (quoted in Tharp and Gallimore, 1998:97). Expounding their own theory of teaching as assisted performance, Tharp and Gallimore (1998) explain that for any skill there is a ZPD. Assisted performance can take different forms, requiring sensitive judgement on the part of the assisting adult or peer so that support is continually adjusted in response to the child's performance (see also Smith *et al*, 2003). Tharp and Gallimore (1998) warn, in particular, that assistance can easily become interference when it ignores what the child can do without help. Hutchby and Moran-Ellis,

however, question the extent to which children ‘are allowed to be competent [...] through their relations with adults’ (1998a:1, emphasis added), perceiving competence to be ‘an achievement that is bounded by structural features of the milieu in which children live their lives’ (1998b:14). This includes their relationships with adults and, implicitly, the school environment. Therefore, it is not only that children are ‘defined by things they cannot do’ (Boyden and Ennew, 1997:60) but also by the things they are permitted to do.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated learning as *legitimate peripheral participation* shows how children, more specifically through ‘apprenticeship’ to specified trades but also in everyday learning situations, are socialised into the legitimate learning activities of the adult community. The activities and experiences they are offered take into account their evolving competencies and allow them to co-participate in and contribute to the community in meaningful ways, albeit only to the degree which their competencies allow. Crucially, knowledge is not abstract, future oriented and transferred through instruction but arises from participation, interaction and the performance of tasks in real situations, with those who have expertise. It is a social practice.

Despite undoubted commonalities, Lave and Wenger (1991) distinguish between the internalisation processes emphasised by assisted learning within the ZPD and learning as legitimate peripheral participation. The latter focuses on the action of the individual on the social world and, in turn, impacts on, and transforms, relations. Drawing attention to the ways in which ‘systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities’, to Lave and Wenger, learning ‘implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations’ (1991:53). Wenger (1998) reiterates this, stating that personal transformation through learning comes about not through curriculum and discipline but through social participation in communities of practice. What is needed, Wenger argues, is for organizations to become contexts within which such communities of practice can flourish. Schools should, therefore, take heed of

Bredeson's contention that they need to develop a 'critical competence', 'a capacity, as a staff, to look analytically and constructively at school practices and structures' (quoted in Rudduck and Flutter, 2004:147).

Children's successful experiences in such participative practices lead not only to increased competence but also increased confidence, both of which foster more effective future participation (Lansdown, 2005). In turn, this leads to an increased sense of autonomy and independence. Related to this is Bartholomew's research which indicates that children's confidence in their ability to make choices 'is a significant and independent predictor of competence' (cited in Lansdown, 2005:24). Limited autonomy, on the other hand, engenders 'learned helplessness', especially in contexts where children feel their access to decision making is limited or where their decisions are likely to be overruled. In light of this, it is significant that children perceive the competencies and responsibilities which are respected at home to be disrespected at primary school (Mayall, 2000).

2.5.5 Children's competencies and research methods

It is suggested that recent developments in developmental psychology which highlight the importance of culture and social experience (Woodhead, 1999) and context (Hogan, 2005) might lead to the possible emergence of new research paradigms. Certainly, it seems reasonable to suppose that sociologists of childhood cannot disregard age-related development when exploring children's accounts of their experiences. Staged and cultural/contextual theories of development, therefore, are not mutually exclusive, certainly when related to children's activities as researchers. Maturity and competence are more likely to be a reflection of social experience (Alderson, 2000b; Christensen and Prout, 2002).

The differences that occur in the ways in which adults and children use language are an important consideration. Greene and Hill (2005) point out that not only do children sometimes fail to understand adults but that adults also frequently misunderstand children.

Adult researchers might not have the knowledge required to understand the concepts used by children (just as child participants might not understand the concepts used by adult researchers) (Fraser, 2004). It is not that children's competencies are lesser than adults' but, instead, are different (Waksler, 1991b). Citing Woodhead, John states that children's communicative competence is encouraged in contexts which respect their modes of communication (2003:183). Indeed, a plethora of research methods have recently been developed which are deemed to accord with children's competencies and modes of communication (see, for example, Waksler 1991b; Thomas and O'Kane, 1998a; Bragg, 2007b).

However, there are some for whom the development of seemingly 'child-friendly' methods is seen as unnecessary (Christensen and Prout, 2002). Punch (2002), who describes some of these techniques in detail, argues that

it is somewhat paradoxical that within the new sociology of childhood many of those who call for the use of innovative or adapted research techniques with children, are also those who emphasize the competence of children. If children are competent social actors, why are special 'child-friendly' methods needed to communicate with them? (2002:321).

Fraser (2004) takes issue with this question, responding that there is 'nothing inherently or essentially 'child-friendly' about such techniques'. They are, he continues, 'all contingent to the frames of cultural reference of researchers and participants. Such techniques are 'participant-friendly' rather than 'child-friendly' (2004:25).

It is not that Punch challenges the need for such methods, however, but that she sets out to explain why they might be needed. Indeed, she, too, argues that such techniques, often drawn from Participatory Rural Appraisal methods used with adults, 'should be referred to as 'research-friendly' or 'person-friendly' (2002:337), concluding that recognition of

children as competent social actors does not mean that only traditional methods should be used. The problem, she espouses, is not that research with children is potentially different from research with adults because children are inherently incompetent, but that adults often view them to be so. Indeed, Connelly has shown that children are ‘capable of reflection [and] sustained engagement with complex issues’ (quoted in Bragg, 2007b:20) such as might be needed in one-to-one interviews.

Warren (2000) agrees with Connelly in this respect. He calls for children, as researchers, to understand that the way in which they see their world impacts on how they choose to carry out their research and to critique their different ways of seeing. Implicating the reflexivity needed of any researcher, this helps draw attention to how children as active researchers might move beyond the role of children as (co-)researchers as more usually understood. Kellett and Dar, for example, reporting on research into literacy practices carried out by children as active researchers in primary schools, contend that ‘the simplicity of the children’s questions and of the language in their questionnaires and interviews elicited open and honest responses from their peers’ (2007:vii). Furthermore, ‘the absence of power relations in the collection of data from children by a child researcher ensured that children’s responses were untainted by efforts to ‘please the adult’ (2007:vii). However, child-child power relations are likely to have been at play. It cannot be ruled out, for example, that participants in the children’s research might have wanted to ‘please’ their peers (or otherwise). These issues, therefore, have the potential to provide points of reflection for the young researchers (see Bucknall in Kellett, forthcoming). Thomson and Gunter take up this point, asserting that, as researchers, children are both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, bringing to their projects ‘their experiences, their beliefs, and their emotions’. These ‘shape and frame what knowledge can be produced in their research’ (2007:329). Acknowledging this in their reports can support children’s claims to validity.

2.5.6 The role of the adult

It seems crucial to balance the need for the ‘personal control’ that ‘increases effort, motivation and persistence in problem solving’ (Ross and Broh, 2000:271; see also Donaldson, 1978) with what Clark describes as key to the success of research by children: ‘doing it properly’ (2004:14). This is necessary, Clark states, in order not to compromise the quality and validity of children’s research nor their experiences as researchers. Therefore, there is a strong case for adult involvement in any research training which children and young people might need to undergo even if it might not be appropriate or necessary while children are actively carrying out their own research (Kellett, 2005a, 2005b; Bucknall, 2005). Kellett acknowledges the challenge of engaging children and young people in learning about research. She proposes a model of research training and methodologies for children and young people which ‘distil rather than dilute the research process’ (2005a:1). In turn, it is hoped that the perspectives of children and of their respondents will be more effectively understood through the development of innovative methods of collecting data which can be used alongside those more traditionally used.

Nevertheless, Kellett (2005b) acknowledges that there are methodological issues which raise concerns about the level of adult involvement necessary. These relate especially to tensions between children’s autonomy and ensuring their safety during data collection, to rigour and validity and to facilitating data analysis. She does, however, draw the crucial distinction between adult support and adult management, demonstrating, with examples, how sensitive and appropriate training can help children to conduct credible research while retaining a sense of ownership (see also Bucknall, 2005). This process is thus seen as empowering (Kellett, 2003), supporting the view that empowering equates with enabling and the recognition of competence (Ashcroft, 1987). Insights into children’s lives are likely to increase only when the competencies of children are focused on, rather than their limitations (Jans, 2004; Sinclair, 2004).

The importance which Kellett (2005b, 2008a), Waller (2006) and Boeck and Sharpe (2009) ascribe to children and young people retaining a sense of ownership raises the issue of adult motivations for engaging children as researchers. While Alderson, for example, acknowledges the potential of child-directed research as a vehicle for children's voices, she refers to children as 'an underestimated, underused resource', highlighting the 'novelty' of their reports as a means of attracting greater publicity than adult research reports might do (2000b:253). While this has the potential to draw attention to children's concerns and inform policy, clearly there is also the potential for adults to exploit children as researchers to serve their own ends. This is explicit in Leitch *et al's* argument that 'all forms of research must recognise the centrality of children's rights and commit to developing the capacity of students as researchers' but that this should be 'in as appropriate forms as possible within the research goals and agendas' (2007:475): an illustration, perhaps, of using young people as researchers (see also Edwards and Hattam, 1999).

It seems reasonable to assert that adult agendas for engaging children in active research are likely to be linked to the agendas of the institutions in which the research training is facilitated. Frost (2007) makes the interesting and valid point that even the impetus to empower children by facilitating their active research arises from adult agendas and this should certainly be a cause for reflection. Rudduck and Flutter (2004), in their exposition on pupil voice, maintain that where interest lies in pupil perspectives rather than voice, the children are likely to be seen only as sources of valuable data. While such data might prompt change in schools, it does not change the status of pupils (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Nevertheless, it can be hoped that, once child-led research has reached a point of critical mass (Kellett, 2008a), this momentum will increase the likelihood that children will identify their own research agendas and that adult influence in this sphere will, consequently, diminish.

2.5.7 Summary

This section has explored how the development of CaR initiatives has been influenced by the perceived lack of children's own voices in research about their lives and as a response to the inevitable power inequalities which are present in adult-child research. Children as researchers direct their own research from inception to dissemination. This work differs from 'research' as it is normally conceived in schools and which is concerned with discovering what is already known.

Instead, the aim is for children to generate original knowledge relating to issues which they themselves identify as significant to their lives. The view that children do not have the competencies needed to engage in this process is an area of debate. Competence in this context is not age-related but is reliant on the acquisition of skills and knowledge which adults, by judging children's training and support sensitively, can 'scaffold' for children. Power relations remain implicated here and need to be interrogated.

The final section of this chapter addresses the research questions that emerge from this review of the literature.

2.6 Research questions emerging from the literature review

As this review has shown, substantial claims have been made by adults regarding process and outcome in relation to the movement towards enabling children to actively engage in research process. These claims, however, are grounded in current debate surrounding the issues of children's status in our society and in school, children's voice and participation and the effects of power in children's everyday lives and in research relationships. As such, these claims are adult views of what is significant or potentially problematic and are largely unsupported by the views of children themselves since little research has been carried out in this area. This is particularly so where children as researchers (CaR) initiatives take place in English primary schools as, although a growing phenomenon, these remain relatively uncommon.

The research reported here aims to address this gap in our knowledge and understanding by documenting children's perspectives on their experiences of the CaR movement. Given the paucity of any evidence-based literature relating to significant and problematic issues concerning CaRs in English primary schools, if children are to be recognised as social actors in their own right and given a voice by offering them opportunities to carry out their own research projects, then it is vital that *their* perspectives on this process, its outcomes and potential barriers are explored.

This exposition of the literature raises many questions which are clearly relevant to the implementation of CaR initiatives. It is particularly evident, however, that the introduction of participative and pupil voice initiatives can be especially problematic in school contexts. Since this is also suggested by the findings of an earlier small-scale study which explored the experiences of young researchers (Bucknall, 2005), it is crucial that the difficulties which CaR initiatives might encounter in this respect are investigated in more depth. Similarly, this literature review reveals that adult-child relationships appear to be a significant factor in participative and pupil voice initiatives. These, too, have been

identified by young researchers during the earlier study as key in relation to their experience of research process. Furthermore, adult perceptions of the outcomes associated with participative initiatives as accounted for in this review do not always concur with those identified the young researchers (Bucknall, 2005).

By taking these issues into account, by aiming to build on the findings of the earlier study and by placing emphasis on the need to explore children's views, therefore, the following research questions have been selected as the focus of this study:

What aspects of English primary school environments create barriers to children's active engagement in research process?

How do children's perceptions of adult-child relationships affect their training and activities as active researchers?

What do children perceive to be the outcomes of carrying out their own research projects?

3. METHODOLOGY

*[Alice went on],
“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”
“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the cat.
Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by restating the research questions framed at the end of the preceding literature review, situating these within the conceptual framework arising from that review and the personal ideology which positions me, as researcher, in relation to the research. Rationales for the choice of research design and the settings for the research are then given. Descriptions of these settings are followed by consideration of the ethical issues which arose throughout the period of this research study. Methods used to generate data are then explained and summary data sets presented. The analytic strategy adopted for the study is then detailed. The chapter ends with reflections on validity and reliability.

3.2 Conceptual framework and research questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of children and adults who have been involved, both directly and indirectly, in initiatives which have developed children as active researchers within English primary schools. It is clear from the literature that the introduction of participative and pupil voice initiatives can be problematic, especially in school contexts (Fielding, 2004b; Cook-Sather, 2006; Bragg, 2007a).

This study has required a dual role of researcher and facilitator and necessitated a high degree of reflexivity. It is important to make a statement, at the outset, about my personal ideology since this has impacted on much of the action and contributed to the framing of the research questions. Recognising and valuing children as social actors and facilitating opportunities through which they can make their voices heard are central to this ideology, an ideology which underpins my roles as both CRC facilitator and researcher. Privileging

the voicing of children's own perspectives on their experiences as young researchers has, therefore, been central to the study.

These considerations gave rise to the following research questions:

What aspects of English primary school environments create barriers to children's active engagement in research process?
How do children's perceptions of adult-child relationships affect their training and activities as active researchers?
What do children perceive to be the outcomes of carrying out their own research projects?

3.3 Research strategy

Multiple-case study was adopted as the research strategy for this project. This strategy was predominantly qualitative and followed a flexible approach which was sufficiently open-ended, reflexive and responsive to allow the exploration of both children's and adults' subjective experiences of their involvement in research groups within school settings.

The project followed the 'typical features' of case studies identified by Yin (2003) by involving a small number of cases of the phenomenon of interest; by studying the cases in their contexts (although, as Miles and Huberman (1994) rightly point out, to do otherwise would be impossible), and by using a range of data generation techniques. As Yin (2003) explains, a case study strategy is ideal where contextual conditions are perceived as pertinent to the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) usefully explain how the bounded nature of cases limits what will and will not be studied. While it was important not to lose sight of other possible factors which may have influenced the outcome of the study, it was also essential to impose some boundaries for pragmatic reasons. So, while each school provided a natural boundary for the phenomena in their contexts (the cases), boundaries were also defined by the time available for data generation and by sampling procedures.

Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) distinguish between 'instrumental' case studies and 'interpretive' case studies and both are implicated here. By providing insights into the participants' experiences of CaR initiatives in schools, each case study was instrumental in

allowing contextual conditions and their impact to be explored. The strategy adopted also allowed conceptual categories to be developed inductively. This was felt to be necessary since, although case study researchers often rely heavily on description and narrative for their reporting (Cohen *et al*, 2000), conceptual categories allowed cross-case comparisons to be made and the relationships between issues made more explicit. Alongside descriptive elements, this seemed of vital importance if the research findings were to contribute meaningfully to the development of CaR initiatives more widely. It is hoped that this multiple-case study will be ‘a step to action’ (Cohen *et al*, 2000:184). It was crucial that the emic issues emerging from the data informed these conceptual categories, rather than the etic issues arising from the literature review. Geertz identified the focus on emic issues, such as that adopted here, i.e., the perceptions of the actors involved in a setting, as ‘thick description’ (cited in Stake, 1995:42).

Although some claims are made for internal generalisability (Robson, 2002) within each of the cases studied, each is unique and no claims are made for external or statistical generalisability of the findings. Nevertheless, collecting data from multiple sources and an attempt to understand both similar and dissimilar cases have resulted in increased understanding of the processes and outcomes implicated when primary school children become active researchers in their own schools. This understanding would seem to have the potential for ‘transferability’ (Gomm *et al*, 2000) to further instances of this phenomenon. Furthermore, by comparing and contrasting conceptual categories across cases and with theoretical issues arising from the literature review – by relating emic and etic concerns - some ‘analytic generalisations’ (Yin, 2003) can be made.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling for this study was both opportunistic and purposive. Although steadily increasing in number, only a few primary schools across the country had children’s research groups or clubs supported by the CRC programme during the period of data generation. For

pragmatic reasons, five English primary schools (Archway, Bridge, Pagoda, Rotunda and Tower) were chosen where some contact had already been established.

Consequently, all five groups in their contexts were chosen as the bounded cases for this study in order to maximise opportunities for increased understanding of the phenomena in the time available. In each setting, engagement with the programme was initiated and facilitated in different ways. These differences are clarified within the descriptions of the five settings given below. To protect school and personal identities, names have been changed. Each school setting is co-educational and state funded. The descriptions of the characteristics and demographics of the five case study schools given next are based on field notes, informal interviews with staff and information drawn from OfSTED reports. To preserve the schools' anonymity, precise details relating to demographic and school performance data are not given.

3.4.1 Cases

3.4.1.1 Archway School

Archway School is a large Church of England primary school situated in a university town in the south midlands. It has approximately 400 pupils aged from 4 to 11 years and most of these live within the catchment area. Although the majority of pupils are White British, a significant proportion represents a wide range of ethnic minority groups. Many parents are academics and pupil mobility is higher than average, with many parents moving into the area from abroad to work or study at the university for varying lengths of time. Consequently, the number of pupils learning English as an additional language is also higher than average. Standards achieved by both girls and boys by the end of Year 6 (10-11 years) are higher than the average achieved both locally and nationally while the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and those entitled to free school meals are below average.

The school has a school council with one elected representative per class. It meets weekly with the headteacher and focuses on non-curriculum issues and fund-raising for the school. The headteacher, who has been in post for several years, holds an annual ‘review’ assembly which gives pupils an opportunity to feedback on activities and events which they have or have not enjoyed during the school year.

Archway was the first of the five case settings to participate in the CRC initiative and the only one where I was directly involved with the children’s research group. In the first year, 2004-2005, the research group was supported by a semi-retired academic who had forged strong links with the school through her role as visiting university tutor for the student teachers based there. There were six Year 6 children in this group which was run as a lunchtime club. The following year, I took over as the adult responsible for training a similar cohort of six pupils although she and I shared the support offered to the children during their own research projects. Two of the six children withdrew from this group soon after they had begun work on their own projects. They had initially been supported by a Year 1 (aged 5-6 years) teacher. Group sessions then took place during curriculum time. The teacher who had been supporting the two girls who withdrew had attended this group’s taught sessions and was given the responsibility for running the group during the following year. At that time, she shared the support of six children’s projects with two other members of staff.

At Archway, the CaR initiative was seen as provision for the school’s more able pupils and the school’s senior management team chose the members of the research groups. Young researchers here were offered a free choice of research topic although these were subject to the headteacher’s approval.

3.4.1.2 Bridge School

Bridge School is also a university town primary school of about 400 pupils. It is situated in the east of England. A significant number of pupils travel from outside the catchment area.

During the period relevant to this study, the school experienced a high level of staff turnover and absence, particularly within the senior management team, and had three headteachers in one academic year. Pupil mobility is high, with many families moving into the area temporarily to work or study at the university. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is much higher than the national average and many of these are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly below average. Standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 are close to the national average although value-added scores indicate that many are underachieving; this has been attributed to the unsettled conditions at the school.

The school has both class and school councils and describes itself as being strongly committed to pupil voice. Council activities focus on non-curriculum issues. All pupils in the school take part in an annual pupil survey in which they are asked their views on the school environment and school events. Pupils have been involved in the drawing up of a new anti-bullying policy and are consulted about the introduction and development of extra-curricular activities.

A CRC facilitator set up and ran the school's research group with six Year 6 pupils. The initiative ran only during the 2005-2006 school year and was implemented as part of a larger, externally funded, research project which sought children's views on aspects of literacy. Within this general theme, the children could choose their own, more specific, topics. After a visit from the CRC facilitator, during which Year 6 children were given information about what was involved, the class teacher chose the members of the group from those children who had expressed an interest in taking part.

3.4.1.3 Pagoda School

Pagoda School is a large primary school situated in the north-west of England in the suburbs of a large city. There are approximately 350 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11 years; there are very few from ethnic minority groups and consequently very few with

English as an additional language. The percentage of children with learning difficulties is slightly below the national average, as is the number entitled to free school meals. However, the school is in an area of increasing social deprivation and the number of pupils with social and language difficulties is increasing. By the end of Year 6, pupils currently achieve slightly above the level expected locally and nationally in English with significantly higher achievement in Mathematics and Science.

The school has a very active school council with members elected from each class. Issues for discussion are not restricted and the council is able to make representations to the senior management team and school governors, several of which have led to change. For example, the children identified playground crowding and consequent behaviour problems as an issue. After consultation with the staff, teachers agreed to carry out more playground duties to facilitate staggered playtimes. Fund raising activities organised by the children support charitable organisations.

The CaR initiative here was instigated by an external agency which had selected the school on the basis of its strong pupil voice ethic. A CRC facilitator supported the children's research training in partnership with an independent educational consultant. One of the school's teachers attended the children's training workshops. These were held jointly at a city centre venue, with students and teachers from a city secondary school who were also participating in the agency's project. The group consisted of a mixed ability group of six Year 5 (9-10 years) pupils, selected by their teachers. The children's research was carried out during a short period of the summer term, in school and during curriculum time, with the support of the adults who had attended the training workshops. The general theme of the children's research, creativity, was imposed by the external agency but, within this theme, the children could choose the particular aspects they wanted to explore.

3.4.1.4. Rotunda School

Rotunda School is a smaller than average primary school situated in an area of social deprivation in an outer London borough. There are approximately 230 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11 years. One quarter of the pupils is from a range of ethnic minority groups, mostly Black British or African. The school has pupils from refugee and traveller families and this contributes to high pupil mobility. For a significant proportion of pupils, English is their second language and many are in the early stages of learning this. Almost half the pupils have special educational needs, a proportion much higher than the national average and attainment of pupils joining the Foundation Stage (3-5 years) is well below average. Although attainment by the end of Year 6 is below average, achievement is deemed as satisfactory given the difficult circumstances in which the school operates.

The school has an active school council which has had a positive impact on non-curriculum issues. Circle time is a regular event in all classes, allowing pupils to raise issues of concern to them. Pupils have also taken part in surveys to establish, for example, favoured Friday afternoon activities and their views on pupil behaviour.

The school's deputy head facilitated the research training alongside her role as class teacher, working with a whole class of Year 6 pupils during both the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. She drew upon CRC training resources, adapting her 'children as researchers' work to fit in with the demands of the curriculum. Support was given by a retired university lecturer who had attended adult training workshops run by the CRC and who acted as a facilitator. Since the children as researcher initiatives here were implemented with whole classes, children with a wide range of abilities were taught research methods and were able to choose and carry out their own projects within curriculum time.

3.4.1.5 Tower School

Tower School is a smaller than average primary school with approximately 220 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11 years. It is situated in south east London in an area of social deprivation. Pupils from Black African, Black Caribbean, Black British and Chinese families make up four-fifths of the school population. Half of all pupils have English as an additional language and there are 22 different languages spoken in the school. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals – almost half of all pupils - is well above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is well below average. Pupil mobility is low. Attainment on entry to the school is below average but by the end of Year 6 is above the standard expected locally and nationally.

The school has an active school council which is involved in fund raising and in the organisation and running of the school, with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the council able to attend governors' meetings to make reports and discuss agenda items. These have included teacher-pupil relationships and curriculum issues in addition to playground and lunchtime concerns.

An external facilitator, who had also supported the CaR initiative at Rotunda is a governor at this school and had offered to run a research group for pupils within curriculum time. During the 2005-2006 school year, this involved a group of six average and above-average ability Year 5 pupils who had a free choice of research topics. These pupils then acted as peer mentors during the following year, when the initiative was extended to the whole of their Year 6 class. The external facilitator continued to support the class teacher but, when the class teacher suffered a long period of ill-health, the initiative was abandoned.

3.4.2 Within-case sampling

As explained earlier in this section, the bounded nature of each case was partially defined by sampling decisions made at the time the project was planned. It was decided, for example, that adult participants would be limited to those who were directly involved with

the research clubs in each school or, through their role in school, with the children who belonged to these clubs or with their peers. Parents of pupils were thus excluded for the purposes of this study since it is the schools as settings (and bounded contexts) for each case (research group) which were of interest. To collect multiple viewpoints from within each setting, the invitation to participate in the study was extended to both the young researchers and their peers since the latter were likely to have their own views on the activities and impact of the research groups.

Thus, it was planned for data generation to focus on the children who were members of the research groups, their peers, their class teachers, members of the school's senior management teams and the adults who facilitated the training in each school and supported the children during their research (whether internal or external to the school). However, due to staff absences, the period within which data could be collected and other school activities (both planned and unforeseen), it was not possible to involve all these informants in each case.

3.5 Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Open University Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee (HPMEC). In addition, the *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) and the precepts of the Data Protection Act 1998 have been adhered to. Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance was also obtained.

Whether ethical considerations when researching with children should differ from those made when researching with adults is a cause of considerable debate (see, for example, Hill, 2005; Alderson, 2004; Christensen and Prout, 2002; Thomas and O'Kane, 1998a). Implicated in this debate is the increasing recognition that children are social actors who are competent to interpret and report on their own experiences. Such recognition is explicit in Article 12 of the UNCRC which stipulates the right of children to express their views

and to be heard in all matters which affect them. Since one explicit aim of the study was to facilitate children's voices through recognising their agency and competencies and by redressing adult-child power relations, these considerations have had a powerful influence on the way the research was conducted. Children's rights to information and to be heard need to extend to ethical procedures (Alderson, 2000b) and fully informed consent (BERA, 2004:7). The procedures followed during this study for gaining access and informed consent and in addressing the need for privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and secure data storage were guided by the same principles with both children and adults and are described below. Ethical issues which arose during the planning and implementation of the data generation methods are considered in Section 3.6.

Copies of letters requesting access, letters of information for participants and consent forms can be found in Appendix B.

3.5.1 Access to schools

Purposive sampling meant that access to schools was straightforward. However, the relative ease of access did raise other issues. For example, it became apparent that, in some settings, access to adult participants was seen by school staff as an opportunity to ask for advice about continuing children's research initiatives. This is akin to the 'trade-off' described by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:86) which often allows researchers access to their research settings.

Access granted by the schools' headteachers as gatekeepers did not, of course, preclude unwillingness to participate on the part of potential respondents. This was a particular consideration when headteachers, acting *in loco parentis*, decided that parental or child consent was not necessary. Consequently, access was renegotiated verbally with each participant, whether child or adult, at each stage of data generation as a precursor to obtaining their consent (see below).

3.5.2 Informed consent

Before data generation began, informed consent was sought by letter from all adult participants and from child participants and their parents where the headteacher considered this to be necessary. Although letters to adult and child participants were differently worded, each included not only details of the arrangements made for their potential participation but also information about the researcher, about the study, about what their participation would involve and how any data would be used and stored. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were also addressed and contact details for the researcher and her doctoral supervisors given in case of any concerns. The letters explained the participants 'participation rights' including their right to withdraw at any time, for any reason. Suggested by Alderson (2004) for use in research with children, these did not differ in substance between children and adults although it was crucial that these participation rights were communicated to the children in ways they were likely to understand (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Attached to these letters were consent forms to be signed by participants and returned to me at the time of the focus groups or interviews. Consent for the children to take part was sought from both the child and her or his parent/guardian on necessarily differently worded forms. By sending these in advance, the participants had time to consider the contents of the letter and whether they wished to consent to taking part in the study.

A particular dilemma which arose when wording letters of information was how much detail to give about the purposes of the study. A compromise had to be made between revealing a particular interest in identifying possible barriers to the children's engagement in research process in school and guarding against such a revelation over influencing the data that was collected. It was decided to explain that the researcher was interested in the experiences of children who became researchers while in primary schools and that it was hoped the findings would help the development of the training of such children in the

future. This was not ideal since it did not rule out the possibility of obtaining consent that was not fully informed from those who might otherwise have declined (Hill, 2005).

The contents of the letters and consent forms were discussed with all participants immediately before research activities began. It was especially important to ascertain that the children understood what consent meant and to reiterate the choices open to them. Because it was not possible to discern whether parents had coerced their children into consenting, this also gave the children a chance to dissent if they were not happy. Where headteachers had considered it unnecessary for me to seek parental consent for children to participate, discussion was followed by reading through consent forms with the children. The content of these and the children's participation rights were discussed with the children before asking them if they were happy to sign the forms. When data generation involved a variety of activities (for example, during focus groups), a check was made at each stage that the children were still happy to continue. Consent was also requested for audio recording. No assumptions were made at any stage that initial consent equated with ongoing consent.

It was made clear to the children that, should they refuse or withdraw consent, there would be no negative consequences. Two children and one adult asked not to be recorded during their interviews. During whole class activities, however, several children opted out of completing questionnaires. The proportion of children doing this was higher when the only feasible way to administer whole class questionnaires was for the class teacher to do this in the researcher's absence. When this was unavoidable, the class teachers were given written guidance about administering the questionnaire which reiterated the children's participation rights and asked the teacher to follow the procedures described above before asking the children for their consent.

There are particular concerns when inviting children to participate in research activities in schools since being offered a choice about participating in activities, especially during

curriculum time, is not something they often experience. Where teachers had administered the questionnaires, the number of children opting out at least reassured the researcher that they had been given a choice about completing them.

However, this also raised questions about the effect of the researcher's presence in the classroom when the questionnaires had been administered directly. Every effort was made not to stand at the front of the room and talk 'at' the children but instead to adopt a relaxed attitude, sitting on a desk nearer their level. Doing this, and making further moves (for example, asking that the children used the researcher's first name) attempted to position the researcher as 'other' than an 'adult in school'. Despite this, it seems likely that the norms of expected behaviour towards 'visitors' in school, especially when they are present in the classroom during lesson time, are likely to have influenced the children's decisions about whether to consent to participate.

Even when the researcher was familiar to the children, as at Archway, very few children opted out. Alderson and Morrow (2004) describe how participants who assent rather than consent to taking part in order to avoid straight refusal might contribute in a minimal way. Looking at the completed questionnaires, it was clear that some children had, indeed, opted to contribute very little. It was possible, too, that the teachers had been under pressure from their headteachers to cooperate, especially when arrangements were made for them to be out of the classroom for the purpose of interview participation. Fortunately, however, all those who gave their consent seemed genuinely happy to take part.

3.5.3 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

The difficulties of finding suitable spaces in schools meant that it was sometimes not possible to offer participants the privacy to which they were entitled. Even when a quiet room for group activities or for individual interviews had been requested and promised, these were not always available. One focus group, for example, was moved by a member of staff from the library area reserved for us when another class arrived; after settling down

to continue in a corridor space, a support assistant arrived, having been instructed to take down the wall displays. This, together with other children walking by disrupted not only the children's privacy but also our discussion. On another occasion, no room could be found for a focus group and we were asked to use the deputy headteacher's office; activities were interrupted several times by her walking in and out. Consequently, while confidentiality was promised for all that was told to the researcher - and the children had agreed as part of the 'ground rules' for the focus groups that they would respect the confidentiality of everything said in these contexts - the confidential nature of data generation events was sometimes compromised by others.

Confidentiality may also have been compromised when teachers administered questionnaires for the researcher. The written guidance they were given stressed the importance of the children knowing that their answers would remain confidential and that no-one other than the researcher would look at their answers. Large envelopes were provided for the questionnaires and the teachers asked to seal these as soon as the sheets were collected in. On a few occasions, when teachers asked what children had written, tactful refusal was necessary.

For personal disability reasons, it was necessary for interview and focus group data to be transcribed by others. Again, to protect the identities of those speaking, the school names assigned to the recordings were the chosen pseudonyms and applied before the recordings were handed over. Thus, where real names are given during recordings, the full identities and locations of those referred to were not revealed to transcribers.

3.5.4 Data storage

Where participants gave their consent, focus group discussions and individual interviews were recorded using digital voice recorders and files transferred to hard disk before full transcripts were made. Recordings, transcripts of these and completed questionnaires were kept in a safe and secure place accessible only by the researcher. Data stored on computers

was password protected. The only exception to this was when recordings were transferred to transcribers on CD-ROMs. These were returned as each set of recordings was transcribed. In this unavoidable situation, trust was placed in others to be equally careful with the data, to treat it as confidential and not to make copies. These requirements were discussed with all transcribers before the transfer of data.

Photographs of children undertaking research activities which have been reproduced during the reporting of this research (in this thesis and elsewhere) have been used with the permission of the children and their parents.

3.6 Methods

This section details the various data generation methods adopted within the multiple-case study framework. These are summarised as:

- focus groups with young researchers in all five settings
- focus groups with peers of the young researchers in three settings where the initiative had not directly involved their whole class and in one where, during the first year of the initiative, only a small group of children had been directly involved
- one-to-one interviews with participating adults in all five settings
- questionnaires from peers of the young researchers in the three settings where the initiative had not directly involved whole classes
- questionnaires from young researchers in two settings where it was not possible to facilitate focus groups with all the children directly involved
- non-participant researcher observations and diary reflections.

A summary of these is also integrated into the data sets shown in Tables 3.2 and 3.3.

Focus groups held with groups of young researchers and their peers were designed to include planned participatory activities when this was possible. On two occasions, an impromptu ‘brainstorming’ activity was held instead, in response to particular

circumstances. Questionnaires were distributed to young researchers and to their peers and two young researchers who did not complete their research took part in an unstructured paired interview. Unstructured interviews were also held with all the adult participants in the study.

3.6.1 Child participants

None of the cohorts of young researchers completed their research until very near the end of the school year. As a former primary school teacher, the researcher was aware that attempting to collect data at this time was likely to be problematic since there tend to be many extra activities and outings going on at this time.

However, at Archway, Bridge and Rotunda Schools, this was unavoidable because the children in the research groups were in Year 6 and about to move on from primary to secondary schools. Given the focus of this study, it was felt to be important to talk with these children and with their peers in the same settings in which the research groups had been run and in which they were likely to feel comfortable, a particular consideration when the researcher was unfamiliar to the children. At Pagoda and Tower Schools, where the young researchers had been in Year 5, data generation was delayed until the following autumn term as children remained pupils there. As discussed below, the impact of these different timings on how the data generating activities could be carried out with the children and on the nature of the data which resulted from them had been underestimated.

One of the primary aims of developing children as researchers is to ‘unlock’ children’s voices (Kellett, 2005a). As Clark (2005) argues, methods need to be adopted to help address the imbalance of power between the adult researcher and the child participant. Here, this involved considering how children could actively be involved in the research process by offering them choice and control (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998a) and, at the same time, privileging their perspectives and their own words and acknowledging them as

experts on their own experiences. It was also felt to be important to recognise the skills which the young researchers had developed.

It was not possible to pilot the focus groups as such since no other equivalent groups existed where this could be done sensibly. Indeed, Robson confirms that pilot studies are often problematic in case study research for this very reason. He does suggest, however, that ‘learning on the job’ (2002:185) is to be expected where the purpose of the study is exploratory. Nevertheless, the planned activities and other research instruments designed for use with children, described below, were piloted with a small group of children in a primary school where only two children had been involved in carrying out research individually. The pilot group consisted of these two children and two of their peers. It was important to do this to check that the planned activities were clear and that the wording used was likely to be interpreted by children in the ways which had been intended. Despite these precautions, one questionnaire item, which did not prove problematic during piloting, proved to be ambiguous during the actual research. Interestingly, as discussed in Chapter 4, this provided further data in its own right.

3.6.2 Focus groups

Focus groups were designed as the primary research tool with children in this study, allowing a variety of activities to be included which were likely to meet the criteria for active participation outlined above. Choosing focus groups was also pragmatic since problems with the time schools could offer to facilitate this at the end of an academic year were anticipated. The negotiation of arrangements with school staff for one focus group with each group of children was likely to be looked upon more favourably than trying to arrange several individual interviews. Additionally, the size of the research groups (none exceeded six) made them ideal for this method (Morgan *et al*, 2002). Similar numbers were invited to participate in the focus groups for the young researcher’s peers. It was not possible, however, to follow the advice of Vaughn *et al* (1996) and Mauthner (1997) that

focus groups with children need to be single-sex in order to decrease the likelihood of boys dominating the discussion. Interestingly, in no instance was this found to be a problem and in most cases, the interactions between the children involved were very effective in eliciting different points of view. With the exception of Rotunda, where it was not possible to arrange to see the 2005-2006 cohort before they left, two focus groups were planned in each school: one with the children who had belonged to the research group during the 2005-2006 school year and one with their peers. At Rotunda, this was delayed until the 2006-2007 cohort had completed their work.

Green and Hart (cited in Morgan *et al*, 2002) describe how groups of this kind tend to be more formal when the facilitating adult is seen as an ‘honorary’ teacher. The risk of this happening needed to be minimised especially because, as Garbarino *et al* (cited in Gollop, 2000) point out, children in schools are used to adults knowing the answers and might try to guess what responses the adult might like to hear. By being open, honest and friendly with the children, by using first names, by arranging chairs into a circle and by the same size chairs being used by all, it was hoped that positive moves would be made towards creating the metaphorical space ‘which enables children to speak up and be heard’ (O’Kane, 2000:137).

The focus groups were designed so that, after personal introductions and attending to the issue of consent, each group would be told what their session would involve. This would start with a general discussion. With the young researchers the focus of this would be the children’s experiences of becoming researchers; with their peers, their awareness of the research group and what they felt about it. After that, it was intended that the children would have a choice about the order in which the activities which had been outlined to them were carried out; in this way it was hoped they could control what happened. They were also free to veto activities they did not wish to participate in and to say which parts of the session they were happy to have recorded.

The activities planned and prepared for, and which followed the initial ‘warm-up’ discussion, are described below. These activities were planned to allow the adaptation of the discussion-oriented approach normally adopted with adults to the children’s developmental levels and abilities (McDonald and Topper, cited in Vaughn *et al*, 1996:131). This is not to say that children’s competencies were viewed to be lesser than those of adults, merely different. Although research has shown that children are more than able to engage in in-depth discussion (see, for example, Connelly, cited in Bragg, 2007b), it was to be expected that those children seen at the end of the school year would be both tired and excited. Engaging the children’s interests by making the sessions enjoyable and by offering a variety of activities was felt to be especially important

3.6.3 ‘Diamond Ranking’

This participatory activity was planned as part of the focus groups involving the young researchers because it was one they had enjoyed using during their training and because it had been enjoyed by young researchers during an earlier study (Bucknall, 2005). Used effectively during the Children and Decision-Making Study (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998b), ‘Diamond Ranking’ activities allow children to explore aspects of issues relevant to their lives by ranking them in order of importance. Adapted for this study, nine participant-generated statements about children’s experiences of becoming a young researcher were arranged by each child on a diamond shaped grid in response to being asked *What do you think are the most important things about being a young researcher in a primary school?*. Although ranked in order of importance, with the statements the child considers to be the ‘most’ and ‘least’ important at the top and bottom respectively, these activities avoid the need for straight linear ranking, something children have identified during their research methods training as ‘difficult’ (Bucknall, 2005). Instead, remaining statements are ranked in groups rather than individually. This activity is illustrated in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

It is important for statements used in this activity to be child-generated in order that adult perceptions of the children's experiences are not applied. They were taken from focus group 'brainstorming' sessions held with young researchers during an earlier study (Bucknall, 2005) and their provenance explained to the children. This activity was intended by Thomas and O'Kane (1998a) as a prompt for discussion with individual children and it was hoped it would stimulate discussion within the group. However, by offering the children choices about the activities they undertook, it was not guaranteed that this would happen.

The nine statements used for the initial 'Diamond Ranking' exercise were as follows:

- Having the choice about whether or not I want to be in the research group
- Having a choice about the topic for my research
- Being able to present the findings of my research project in front of other people
- Working with an adult/adults who are not members of school staff
- Being able to work on my research project with a friend
- Having adult help only when I need it
- Being told all the project and how much work is involved before the group work starts
- Being able to work on project during lesson time
- Being able to use a computer for my project whenever I need to

Although the relative importance afforded to different statements was treated primarily as qualitative data during data analysis, a simple 1-5 scoring system allowed comparison within and across groups, a statement at the top of the grid scoring 5 and one at the bottom scoring 1. Thus, even without the discussion element, the focus on children's own words as low-inference descriptors allowed the statements and their ranking to provide very useful



FIGURE 3.1 Young researchers completing a ‘Diamond Ranking’ activity

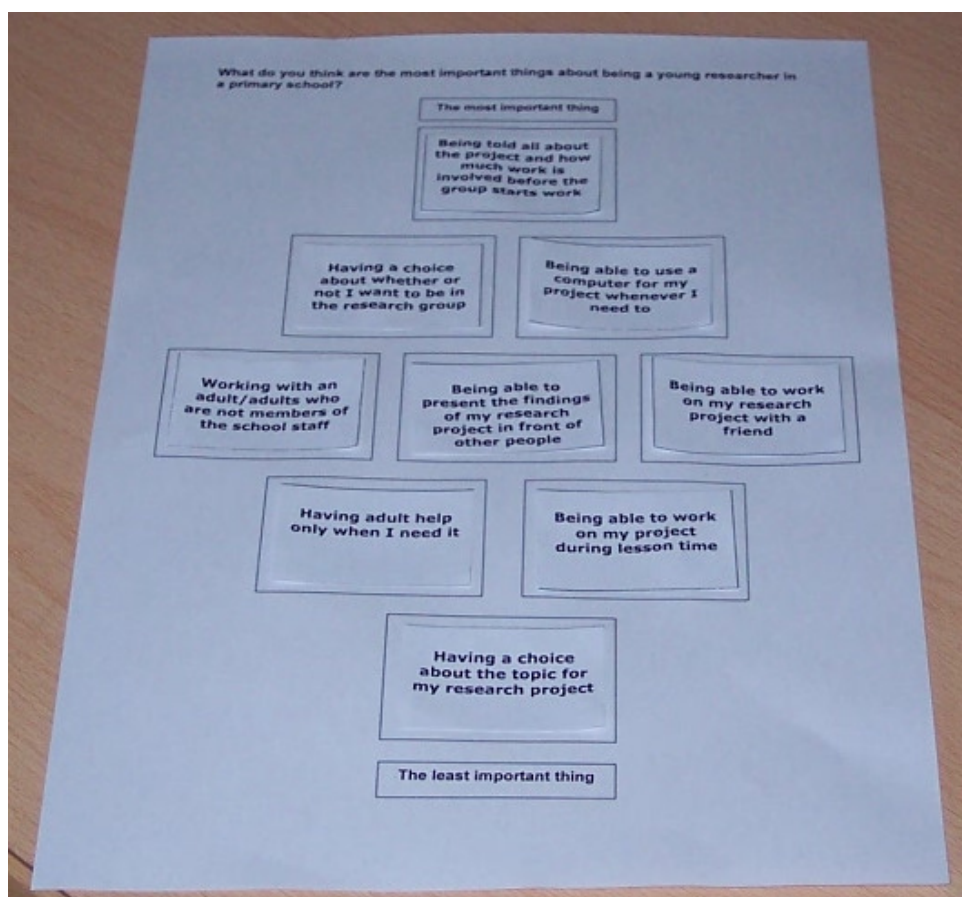


FIGURE 3.2 A completed ‘Diamond Ranking’ activity sheet

reference points. In two schools, acting on the children's own evaluation of 'Diamond Ranking' as a method of capturing their perspectives had a significant impact on the data generated.

3.6.4 Cups and counters

Adapted from a 'Pots and Beans' activity (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998b; O'Kane, 2000), 'cups and counters' was another technique which the children had learned during their research training. Re-named only because cups and counters were more practical to travel with, this activity was also intended as a stimulus for discussion within the group (as Thomas and O'Kane had intended it should be). This type of activity is a participatory method that enables children to 'rank' the relative importance of their attitudes and feelings in relation to aspects of the topic under discussion. They do this by deciding how to allocate counters (or beans) to a set of cups (or pots).

Each cup is assigned a label appropriate to the focus of the discussion. In this case, the activity was used for the focus groups with the young researchers and with their peers, as a way of exploring the feelings all the children had about their involvement or lack of involvement with the research group. Hence, each cup was labelled with a 'smiley' face representing an emotion; the range of these differed according to the question being asked, as appropriate. Eight plastic cups were arranged in a row and the children given six counters each. In response to the questions asked, the children were asked to decide, individually, how to distribute their counters among the pots, the number placed in each one depending on the relative strengths of the feelings they had experienced. Having eight 'emotions' to choose from avoided the children simply placing one counter in each pot.

The questions the children were asked and the range of possible responses from which the children could choose are shown in Table 3.1. Figure 3.3 shows how the activity was set up.



FIGURE 3.3 Setting up the ‘Cups and counters’ activity

Group		Young researchers			Young researchers’ peers	
Questions		<i>How did you feel when you found out you had been chosen to be a member of the research group?</i>	<i>How did you feel about other children not being able to be part of the research group?</i>	<i>How do you feel now that your research project is finished?</i>	<i>How did you feel when you found out you had not been chosen to be a member of the research group?</i>	<i>How do you think you would have felt if you had been told you were going to be part of the research group?</i>
Possible responses	happy					
	angry					
	upset					
	surprised					
	worried					
	proud					
	pleased					
	hurt					
	relieved					
	OK					
	disappointed					
	confused					

Shaded cells indicate the possible responses for each question from which the children could choose.

TABLE 3.1 Questions asked of young researchers and their peers during the ‘Cups and counters’ activity.

In order to be sensitive to the children perhaps not wanting to reveal to the rest of the group the reasons for their decisions, again, the discussion element was something the children would need to decide about. Without discussion, the activity had the potential to at least give a general indication of the strength of positive or negative feelings about their various experiences.

3.6.5 ‘Brainstorming’

Previously unplanned brainstorming activities were carried out with two groups of young researchers, with a small group at Archway (Cohort 1) and with twelve children (in two groups of six) from the whole class young researchers initiative at Rotunda. It had been intended to carry out the other participatory activities described above within the context of focus groups but at Archway we had insufficient space and, at Rotunda, insufficient time. The children agreed that it was possible, instead, to ‘brainstorm’ responses to two questions which were posed: *What do you think are the most important things about becoming a young researcher in a primary school?* and *What were the problems associated with becoming young researchers in your school?* (the latter being asked only after the children suggested there had been some problems). Responses were recorded on paper.

3.6.6 Conducting the focus groups

Despite arriving at each school well prepared to facilitate the focus groups in the ways that had been planned, plans were thwarted in all but two of the schools. As already stated, some problems had been anticipated when trying to arrange the focus groups at the end of the school year. Nevertheless, and over-optimistically perhaps, it was hoped that once final arrangements had been made and the space and time needed for the planned activities asked for and agreed to, previously anticipated difficulties might not arise.

At Archway, instead of the ‘group room’ arranged, the researcher was shown into the Deputy Headteacher’s office and asked to wait for the four young researchers there.

Reservations were expressed about this very small space in which it would be necessary to sit around one small table since it was clear that this meant the planned activities could not be carried out. Sadly, it was the only room available at that time in the morning. Moreover, it was made clear that two of the children would be needed for a previously unscheduled rehearsal for their school play forty-five minutes later. This ‘focus group’ with the young researchers thus became more akin to a group interview with our activities limited to discussion, although the interaction between the members of the group was good and was not reliant on a straightforward question and answer format. As part of the discussion, an impromptu ‘brainstorming’ activity was introduced. The children seemed to enjoy using colourful round ‘sticky notes’, which the researcher had with her, to record what they felt to be important about their experiences of becoming young researchers and to identify any problems they had encountered. So, despite an unforeseen change in arrangements, the set of stationery resources the researcher invariably carried when working in schools proved very useful.

The meeting with six of the young researchers’ peers here was even more cramped and consequently, our activities were again restricted to discussion. These children seemed rather more reluctant to discuss amongst themselves the issues raised. This may have been because they were not as used to working together in a group as the young researchers were. It is possible that the children’s responses were also inhibited by the door to the room being left open and the deputy headteacher walking in and out several times to collect documents from her desk.

The space offered at Bridge initially seemed promising. The focus group discussion with the young researchers began in the library area which had been reserved but, before other activities could begin, another class arrived to use the computers situated there. Their teacher was unaware of the arrangements that had been made but found us a small corridor space to use instead. It was clear that here, too, practical activities would not be feasible.

Even the discussion was interrupted by other children walking by, often wanting to know what the children in the group were doing. With no table to use, writing on sticky notes, as had been possible at Archway, proved impractical. This was difficult. It was felt that the first group had been let down by initially offering them a choice of activities and then not being able to honour that promise. Taking care not to be critical of the school, it was explained to the second group, six of the young researchers' peers, what had happened and that what had been planned could not go ahead. All that could be done in these circumstances was to facilitate informal discussions with both groups although neither seemed to mind and appeared happy to chat, having much to say.

In each of the two schools above, I met with the groups during the final week of term having waited for these Year 6 pupils to complete their research projects so that they could be interviewed before they moved on to secondary school. Despite the often difficult circumstances in which the planned focus groups had to be conducted, the data generated proved valuable. However, while grateful to the schools for allowing access at this very busy time of year, it was a cause of disappointment that it was not possible to offer the children the choice and control intended.

At Pagoda and Tower Schools, experiences were very different. Since the children in the research group had been Year 5 pupils, it was possible to wait until their first term in Year 6 before going into school to meet with them. In both settings, quiet rooms with plenty of space to work had been arranged and there was plenty of time in which the children could decide what they wanted to do. Consequently, the children in both the young researcher and peer focus groups could be offered all the activities and choices planned. All four sessions were enjoyable and feedback from the children was both positive and interesting, particularly in respect of the 'Diamond Ranking'.

Once the children at Pagoda had completed this activity, they were asked if they thought 'Diamond Ranking' was a good way of finding out what they felt about becoming

researchers. Significantly, they felt that ranking other young researchers' statements was problematic since their own responses to the same question were likely to be different. In answer to this, they were invited to write down their own responses to the question, which they did. The children were then asked if they would like to repeat the activity, using their group's statements rather than those of other young researchers. They were keen to do this and, with their class teacher's agreement, it was promised that all they needed to repeat the activity would be sent to them once the necessary materials had been prepared.

There was remarkable similarity between the children's own statements and only very minor changes needed to be made in order to allow statements on the same theme to be integrated. Nine new statements were thus generated. Examples of the children's statements can be found in Appendix C. The children repeated the activity individually at a later date and the completed sheets posted back.

Shortly afterwards, the children at Tower also completed this activity. When they evaluated this method, they, like the children at Pagoda, expressed reservations. Consequently, these children also were invited to write down their own statements and to repeat the activities as above. Copies of the children's own statements facilitated a comparison with those generated by the children at Pagoda. Unfortunately, the sheets from the repeat activity, carried out with the children's own statements in school at a later date, went missing. With the school's assurance that they were sent, it can only be assumed they were lost in the post.

Although time in the focus groups was taken up with discussion about the method rather than about the children's own ranking decisions, 'Diamond Ranking', adapted and extended in the ways described above, provided valuable further child-generated data in ways that met the criteria which informed the methodology for the study. It has helped to maintain a dialogue with the children through which they have had an authentic role in shaping the data (Bucknall, 2007).

At Rotunda, the whole class had been involved as young researchers and it was arranged that two focus groups with six volunteers in each would take place. On arrival at the school, it was clear that this was going to be difficult as the children needed to rehearse for an end of year production. It was possible to have only an hour in total with them before the classroom was needed again. The children who were not directly involved in the rehearsal were then given a choice by their teacher of staying in the classroom with the researcher or going down to the hall to read or draw. Six children decided to stay and it was agreed that another group of volunteers would be sent back to the classroom when the first group had finished. It was particularly important in these circumstances to make sure that the children were happy to take part but the time taken to ensure their consent was willingly given ate into the short time available. As a result, the activities with each group were confined to a 'brainstorming' session, with the children being invited to identify what was important about becoming a young researcher and any problems they had encountered. This was both frustrating and disappointing as this was the only school where the whole class were involved and it was not feasible to visit the school again (it was the last week of term) before these Year 6 children left.

3.6.7 Unstructured interviews

One unstructured interview was carried out at Archway with two children who had left the research group shortly after beginning their own research. They had chosen to be interviewed as a pair rather than individually and did not want the interview to be recorded but were happy for notes to be made; these were typed up as soon as was feasible. We had the use of a small, quiet room and were not interrupted. Although the interview was unstructured and it was hoped it would take the form of an informal discussion, care needed to be taken not to allow one child to dominate the discussion. This was done by deliberately directing some questions at her companion.

3.6.8 Peer group questionnaires

Findings from an earlier study (Bucknall, 2005) had indicated that the views of the peers of children in school research groups might usefully add to those of the young researchers themselves, especially when exploring the contexts in which the children's research took place. Nevertheless, through my previous work in schools, I was aware that it is often the same few children who are chosen to take part in activities that are not part of the normal school day and also aware that this may have impacted on the make up of the peer focus groups. It was important, therefore, to try to collect as wide a range of views as possible and the only feasible way to do this in the time available seemed to be to administer questionnaires to whole class groups (excluding the young researchers).

A questionnaire (ChQ1) (Appendix C) was designed and piloted and then, in three schools (Archway, Bridge and Pagoda), offered to all the children in the year groups to which the research group members belonged, except for the young researchers themselves. It was not always possible for me to administer the questionnaires in person and I was reliant on the willingness of the schools and their teachers to find the time to do this; possible implications of this have been discussed above. This questionnaire was not used at Tower because data generation here was to have focused primarily on the whole class young researchers initiative which had begun before access to the school was possible; it was not, therefore, appropriate. Neither was it appropriate at Rotunda where a whole class initiative had taken place.

This questionnaire focused on the children's awareness of the research group activities, on opportunities for involvement in the group and in the research projects, and on their views on children as researchers.

3.6.9 Research group questionnaires

A further questionnaire (ChQ2) (Appendix C) was designed for use at Rotunda where all the children had taken part in the young researchers initiative and at Archway where it

became clear it would be the only feasible way of collecting data from the children who had belonged to the research group in the school year 2006-2007. The purpose of this questionnaire was to explore the children's views about children as researchers, to find out which aspects of their experiences as researchers they felt to be most significant and if they had experienced any problems or difficulties during their training or own research. Accordingly, only open questions were used. In both cases, class teachers organised its administration and its return and the number returned indicated that some children had declined to complete the questionnaire.

It became apparent that, at Rotunda and very shortly before they were asked to complete this questionnaire, the children had been asked by their class teacher to complete another she had designed jointly with the external facilitator who had supported her in implementing the CaR initiative. This had also provided a means of assessing the children's experiences. When shown a copy, it was evident that the wording of questions in their questionnaire may possibly have influenced some of the responses received from the children not only to the questionnaire but also during the 'brainstorming' sessions held during the visit to the school. This needed to be borne in mind during data analysis

3.6.10 Observation

Although participant observation is often considered to be a commonly used research tool during case study research (see, for example, Robson, 2002; Cohen *et al*, 2000; Stake, 1995), it was not extensively used for this project. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, and pragmatically, the wide geographic spread of the case schools meant that it would not be possible to be present while the different children's research groups were meeting. The exception to this was at Archway, where personal involvement as adult facilitator for the group during the 2005-2006 school year allowed observational field notes to be written during this period. However, due to the difficulty of doing this during group sessions, notes had to be written retrospectively, albeit as soon as possible afterwards. Additionally,

concern was felt that collecting a substantial amount of data in just one of the schools would result in a marked imbalance of data. Participant observation in the other four schools was restricted to those occasions on which the schools were visited for the purpose of data generation for the study. The field notes made at the time informed the descriptions of events given above and were also drawn upon to inform memos during data analysis. The contexts for data generation have thus provided valuable additional sources of evidence.

Secondly, as Yin (2003) points out, accurate perceptions of case study phenomena arise from those who are internal to the case, rather than external. Arguably, spending longer in the field, as would have been possible had a single case study been conducted, might have allowed the researcher to move more closely towards an 'insider' position. However, given the context of this study, it was particularly important to explore the experiences of all those involved from their own perspectives rather than to rely on field notes that documented my own impressions and interpretations of the activities and discussions that took place.

It was possible to carry out a limited amount of non-participant observation when invited to Archway to watch the 2006-2007 cohort present their research to their peers. A similar opportunity arose from an invitation to the venue where the children from Rotunda disseminated their research to children and teachers from other local primary schools, and ran small workshops to introduce their guests to some of the methods they had used. Had it been feasible, opportunities to carry out what Robson describes as 'unobtrusive observation' (2002:310) might have been beneficial in informing an understanding of the contexts for data generation. Such observation is, he argues, appropriate to the exploratory phase of research where the intention is to find out what is going on in particular contexts. However, during a previous study (Bucknall, 2005), the difficulties of conducting non-participant observation became apparent since school staff were inevitably aware of the

researcher's experience of working with children as researchers. This invariably resulted in invitations to assist either the adult facilitator or the children, thus influencing how the groups were run. It was, therefore, impossible to observe the sessions as they would normally happen (Denscombe, 1998). Furthermore, it often proved difficult to maintain objectivity in producing factual accounts of how the children's training in schools was facilitated since previous professional involvements, described earlier in this thesis, naturally induced comparisons between old experiences and the new.

Even with the small amount of observational data collected during this study, it needs to be borne in mind that everything that was chosen as a focus, every question asked and every note taken was part of an interpretative process, a subjective and etic analysis of what was 'important'.

3.6.11 Adult participants

In total, fourteen adults participated in this study and all had direct involvement with either the facilitation of the research groups or with the children in them. Each had one of six roles: a class teacher of the children in a research group; a class teacher/facilitator working with a research group; the headteacher of children in a research group; a facilitator working with the young researchers under the 'umbrella' of the Children's Research Centre at The Open University; a facilitator working with the young researchers for an external agency, or a facilitator working with the young researchers independently of any organisation.

3.6.12 Unstructured individual interviews

Unstructured interviews are an 'essential source of case study information' (Yin, 2003:89), avoiding the researcher-led agenda of a more formal and structured approach. These interviews were conducted with the majority of adults after the children they worked with had completed their research projects. Their aim was to provide information from multiple perspectives, both within and across cases, to supplement those of the children. In some settings, the number of adults interviewed was greater than in others and it was not always

possible to interview more than one adult in each setting. Factors which affected this were staff involvement with end of term activities; the willingness of the school to arrange for teachers to be released from lessons; the willingness of staff members to be interviewed in their own time, and unexpected events which occurred after arrangements had been made. In one school, for example, an emergency staff meeting had been called; in another, the school had just had an unfavourable OfSTED inspection and the attentions of the staff were, understandably, elsewhere. Nevertheless, almost all the adults directly responsible for facilitating the children's training and supporting the children's research were included.

With the exception of one teacher, who felt it was more convenient to be interviewed in her own home, all school based staff were interviewed in their own schools. The CRC facilitator and the external facilitator who had supported the young researchers at Bridge, Tower and Rotunda, were, by their own choice, interviewed at the university. Arrangements were made to meet with representatives of external agencies either at their places of work or in their own homes, all considerations of personal safety being taken into account. Access to quiet and private rooms was not problematic except in one school where the interview was interrupted twice, causing alternative spaces to be sought. All but one of the adult participants consented to their interviews being recorded. Where consent was not given, notes were made and typed up as soon after the interview as was possible.

These interviews had as their general theme the adults' expectations and experiences of being involved in or witnessing the children's research and perceived outcomes. Facts about their involvement were also gathered. No specific questions were prepared, as the interviews needed to be informal and unstructured; however, occasional use of an 'aide memoire' was made. This consisted of a list of the general areas which it was hoped would be covered in the time which had been negotiated. On the whole, the participants seemed happy to chat and those topics contained in the 'aide memoire' occurred naturally within the course of these conversations which were as 'informal' or 'everyday' as could be

managed (Kvale, 1996; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Two participants needed more direct questioning; consequently, the interviews were rather more formal than had been intended. However, in these instances, no questions were pre-prepared; those asked were necessarily informed by what had already been said.

Kvale describes how, despite such aspirations, a research interview cannot be a conversation between equal partners because ‘the researcher defines and controls the situation’ (1996:6). In one situation, however, the researcher was most definitely not the one in control. A headteacher, who cut short the time we had negotiated for our conversation because she had called a last-minute staff meeting, wanted only to ask questions about how the school should continue the children’s research initiative the following year. Nonetheless, this surprising turn of events provided some useful data about the school as a context for young researcher initiatives.

There was a constant need to maintain a balance between the informality striven for, the need to garner the information wanted and the need to focus on the interviewees’ own words. Importantly, their emic analyses of what was significant, along with those of the children, gave rise to the participant concept indicators used in the first stages of data analysis as described below.

3.7 Data Sets

Data sets summarising the methods used in each of the settings for this study and indicating the sizes of within-case samples are presented in Tables 3.2 (child participants) and 3.3 (adult participants).

		CASE SETTINGS					
School		Archway		Bridge	Pagoda	Rotunda	Tower
School year in which research group was run		2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006	2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006
SAMPLE	METHOD						
(Numbers indicate the size of within-case samples)							
Young researchers	Focus groups	4		6	5	12	6
	Discussion	✓		✓	✓*		✓
	Diamond Ranking				✓		✓
	Cups and counters				✓		✓
	Brainstorming	✓				✓	
	Questionnaire 2		5			19	
	Unstructured interview	2*					
Peers	Focus groups	6		6	6		6
	Discussion	✓		✓	✓		✓
	Cups and counters				✓		✓
	Questionnaire 1	78		32	29		
Total duration of recorded discussion (hours:minutes)		1:11		0:50	1:13	0:48	0:54

* All or part of discussion not audio recorded and notes taken

TABLE 3.2 Data Set (child participants)

		CASE SETTINGS						
School		Archway		Bridge	Pagoda	Rotunda		Tower
School year in which research group was run		2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006	2005-2006	2005-2006	2006-2007	2005-2006
SAMPLE	METHOD: Individual unstructured interviews							
(Numbers indicate the size of within-case samples)								
Class teacher of children in research group		3 ^a	1 ^a		1			1
Class teacher/facilitator working with research group			1			1 ^b	1 ^b	
Headteacher of children in research group			1*		1			
Facilitator, Children’s Research Centre				1				
Facilitator, External organisation					2			
Facilitator, Independent		1				1 ^c		1 ^c
Total duration of recorded interviews (hours:minutes)		3:45	1:05	0:58	4:12	1:29	0:52	1:36

^a, ^b and ^c are individuals who took part in more than one interview

* Discussion not audio recorded and notes taken

TABLE 3.3 Data set (adult participants)

3.8 Analytic strategy

This section details the analytic strategy adopted for this study. Issues of reliability and validity are then considered. As previously explained, the mainly qualitative data generated were supplemented by a smaller amount of quantitative data. Although these necessitated different approaches to analysis, the data were not seen to be separate but interrelated. At all stages, ‘participant’ rather than researcher identified concepts were privileged.

3.8.1 Qualitative data

In accordance with the distinction Robson (2002) draws between case studies and grounded theory studies, qualitative data analysis within this study has not strictly adhered to the procedures devised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and by Strauss and Corbin (1998) but, rather, has been informed by them. As Charmaz reveals, Glaser and Strauss ‘invited readers to use grounded theory strategies flexibly in their own way’ (2006:9). Thus, analysis has been carried out ‘in the style of’ grounded theory. The constructivist approach to applying grounded theory strategies which has been adopted here ‘sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data’ (Charmaz, 2006:130).

Full transcripts were made of all interviews and focus group discussions in order to generate as many concept indicators as possible during initial analysis. These, along with observation notes, sets of responses to open questions in questionnaires, and statements generated during ‘Diamond Ranking’ and ‘brainstorming’ activities were imported as documents into the qualitative data handling software NVivo7. In the early stages of data analysis, it seemed this would be instrumental in allowing data analysis to be systematic, following the ‘fairly classic set of analytic moves’ used in qualitative research described by Miles and Huberman (1994:9) and by Richards (2005). These moves have been used to structure both the sequence of the data analysis and the account given below.

3.8.2 Reading, reflection and review: beginning open coding

Beginning with the data generated with child participants, the first stage of analysis involved reading and re-reading hard copies of each document while reflecting on their content. This facilitated a move from identifying which pieces of data seemed particularly interesting to identifying why they were so. As more documents were read, reflections were informed by what had been read earlier and, in this way, further ideas and possible themes began to emerge. Throughout this preliminary process of open coding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), thoughts and responses were noted, initially in the margins of printouts and later in the form of annotations and memos stored within the NVivo file. Links between passages that seemed to be related were noted and, once working with documents within NVivo, live links set up. This process involved revisiting documents which had been read and annotated or memoed earlier to check for passages which now seemed to be significant.

3.8.3 Applying codes to the sets of data: topic, open and axial coding

Analysis was applied to entire documents although the amount of transcribed data and time constraints prompted the decision to focus on chunks of text ('indicators') rather than individual words or short phrases (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Dey's (1999) criticism of the fragmenting process involved in Strauss and Corbin's approach as one which prevents a grasp of a 'holistic view' was also a consideration. Indeed, later in the analytic process, it was often found that coded data needed to be revisited in its original context if clarification or elucidation was required. This proved to be a valuable part of the process, especially if coding needed to be amended in the light of emerging concepts.

Documents were first coded according to topic by asking, 'What is being talked about here?'. Topic coding (Richards, 2005) subsequently allowed all data relating to a single topic to be coded at 'factual' nodes and compiled in a new document using NVivo7. A further layer of 'open coding' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) was

then carried out. Scrutiny and repeated re-reading of these compilations enabled the identification of conceptual categories and the creation of related nodes to which relevant passages could be coded. Richards (2005) describes how this process of reflection and interpretation, performed at a more abstract level than the more concrete topic coding, opens up the data. Some indicators were coded at more than one node.

Subsequent documents were coded to nodes already created or to new nodes when new concepts were identified. It was important to avoid the danger of assigning concepts already identified when moving from one document to another; instead, each 'chunk' of text was regarded as a potential indicator of a new concept. The aim was to use only 'participant' rather than researcher identified concepts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:211). As Silverman's (2001) exposition on analytic process argues, all human beings make sense of the world around them by 'coding' their experiences. Using words participants themselves used to describe their experiences of the CaR initiatives thus helped to make their own 'coding' the basis for analysis.

Revisiting all the data collected at each node and reflecting upon them allowed possible further conceptual categories to emerge. This stage of 'axial coding'. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) allowed not only the exploration of the central categories but also the identification of new concepts suggested by the collated data.

3.8.4 Adding comments and reflections: memos

Similarities and differences between the indicators in the contexts of the categories to which they had been assigned prompted the making of conceptual links. Emerging relationships between conceptual categories revealed that some could be regrouped into newly identified categories. This process was aided by the making of 'theoretical' memos (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) during the process of the axial coding described and prompted the reappraisal of other categories in order to find related ideas.

3.8.5 Identifying similarities, differences and relationships: constant comparison

There followed a process of ‘constant comparison’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:67) as further data were analysed. Data collected from different groups of participants in each setting were compared, not only in order to discover differences and similarities within each group’s data but also between this data and data already coded. Robson explains that axial coding completes the analysis process when the researcher is ‘concerned with exploring or describing the phenomenon being studied’ (2000:495). Therefore, it was felt that the analytic focus could move to the interpretation of the theoretical concepts which had been gathered together within cases. However, the process of constant comparison was also applied to sets of data across cases. This, together with consideration of theoretical issues arising from the literature review, has allowed ‘analytic generalisations’ to be made (Yin, 2003).

3.8.6 Some problematic issues

Analysis during this study has not followed the inductive process usually associated with grounded theory. As has been explained, much of the data were necessarily collected after the children had completed their research projects, in different settings but within a very short space of time. It was not possible, in the time available before children (and, in some cases, staff) moved on from the schools to revisit the settings for the purpose of following up any initial analysis.

This situation was compounded by other pragmatic complications. A disability (hearing loss in one ear) caused difficulties when trying to transcribe data recordings. A grant towards the cost of employing transcribers was sought and eventually awarded but only after a significant delay. One transcriber was able to work on most of the children’s focus group recordings soon afterwards but there then followed a further long period of time when it proved extremely difficult to find other transcribers. Initial analysis of the children’s focus groups data was undertaken in the interim period. However, when analysis

of the remaining data was eventually begun, it could not be certain that coding responses were, after this enforced time lapse, consistent with those made earlier. Since such consistency was important for the reliability of the study, and although it added considerably to time pressures, the analysis process was begun anew.

Moreover, by this time, the analysis of the child participant data described above had given rise to increasing concern regarding the use of NVivo7 as an analytic tool. Although the many different ways in which the data could be catalogued using this tool were often helpful, the process was felt to have become increasingly mechanistic and working on screen presented a barrier to real engagement with the data. The decision was made to approach the adult data in a different way. Coding was applied to hard copies of the data by hand, different concepts and categories being highlighted in different colours. Although it was not possible to follow every step in the NVivo7 process described above, the basic precepts were unchanged and the process found to be much more useful in facilitating the reflection that the experience of using the coding software appeared to preclude to a certain extent. Realising that computerised analysis tools, so often the default choice in qualitative studies, are not necessarily always the best option was an important learning experience. In the study reported here, the extensive nature of the personal immersion in the long-hand analysis provided more clarity and insight and facilitated more effective inductive comparison and conceptual linkage.

3.8.7 Quantitative data analysis

The approach to quantitative data analysis adopted in this predominantly qualitative study fitted the criteria for ‘exploratory data analysis’. Tukey contrasts this with the ‘confirmatory data analysis’ used in fixed quantitative and positivist research designs (cited in Robson, 2002:399). It has been useful in complementing and informing the discussion and conclusions arising from the qualitative data analysis described above.

3.8.8 ‘Diamond Ranking’ activities

The ‘Diamond Ranking’ activities completed by the children were treated primarily as qualitative data and the statements generated analysed as described above. However, quantitative data can be used alongside qualitative data in grounded theory style analysis as long as the concepts emerge from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and ‘counting is based on members’ own categories’ (Silverman, 2000:185).

The statements placed on each ‘Diamond Ranking’ sheet were allocated a number of points according to their position. The statement considered ‘most important’ was allocated five points and the ‘least important’, one point. Statements placed on the second row scored four points; those in the centre row, three and those in the fourth row, two. By totalling the scores allocated to each statement within each group of children, a consensus view of the relative importance of each statement was obtained and represented graphically. However, using this method did not reveal how important each child felt each statement to be. The resulting charts, therefore, were adapted to show the spread of individual priorities.

3.8.9 ‘Cups and counters’ activities

The different ‘feelings’ the children could choose as responses to the questions asked during this activity were placed into composite categories of ‘negative’, ‘positive’, ‘neither’ or ‘not sure’ during a separate exercise with 48 Year 5 and Year 6 children conducted in another school. It was important that children’s majority categorisations of the feelings informed the analysis of this activity, and not adult researcher perceptions. Summary charts showing a comprehensive breakdown of the results of this exercise can be found in Appendix D. The consequent categories were applied during the analysis of the children’s responses and the results represented graphically.

3.8.10 Questionnaire data

Quantitative data taken from questionnaires, most often in the form of responses to closed or multiple-choice questions and to Likert-type scales, were also represented graphically. Where responses to questions involved the identification of feelings, the same composite categories used for the ‘Cups and counters’ activities were used to inform the analysis.

3.9 Reliability

Particular consideration has been paid throughout this study to Robson’s warning that

researchers using flexible designs do need to concern themselves seriously with the reliability of their methods and research practices. This involves not only being thorough, careful and honest in carrying out the research, but also being able to show others that you have been (2002:176).

Attempts to meet these conditions are evident in the decision to ensure consistency in coding decisions by re-starting the process, in the explicit and detailed descriptions of aims of the methods adopted, and in the rationales given for decisions made. Although Silverman (2001) describes how such detail should, hypothetically, enable another researcher to replicate a research project and thus provide a likely measure of reliability, this is confounded by the specificity of this multiple-case study and by the necessarily flexible approach to unexpected circumstances.

Nevertheless, the reliability of this study is also supported by the application of low-inference descriptors and of participant- rather than researcher-generated concepts and categories during the analytic process. Corroboration of coding decisions by another researcher might have strengthened this (Richards, 2005; Silverman, 2001). This is a strategy which could be explored during future research, but it was not an option available during this study.

3.10 Validity

Triangulation is often suggested as a means of addressing threats to validity in qualitative research and cited as justification for using multiple methods where the results of these show some consistency (see, for example, Cohen *et al*, 2000; Delamont, 2002; Robson, 2002). However, in this study, the generation of data with multiple sources through a variety of methods is not used to support claims to validity through triangulation. Instead, the use of multiple methods has been viewed as the means to explore different experiences of the same phenomenon through the production of multiple viewpoints. This aim has been explicitly stated as justification for the chosen methods. As Silverman (2001) explains, in qualitative research, triangulation ignores the context-bound nature of collected data; therefore, it cannot be representative of a single objective truth.

Nevertheless, attempts have been made to satisfy criteria which Silverman (2001) suggests are likely to address threats to validity, namely constant comparison and comprehensive data treatment. The first of these is accounted for in Section 3.8.5 where the analytic strategy adopted for this study is described. The second has involved selecting, as cases, *all* those settings where children's research initiatives were taking place in English primary schools under the umbrella of the CRC at that time and then by analysing *all* the data that was collected in those settings (see also Robson, 2002). In this way, selecting only those data which were likely to fit with theoretical and conceptual categories has been avoided (ten Have, cited in Silverman, 2000:180).

Furthermore, allowing concepts to emerge from the data rather than applying researcher presuppositions, considering alternative interpretations and reflecting on the potential impact of reactivity and of researcher and respondent bias throughout the research process have been crucial validity elements of this study.

3.11 Summary

This chapter has described in some detail the methodological approach adopted for this study. Accounts of and rationales for the methods adopted for both data generation and analysis have been given and considerations of ethics, reliability and validity attended to.

The following chapter sets out to present and interpret the findings of the study.

4. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

“This is a child!” Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice to introduce her, and spreading out both his hands towards her in an Anglo-Saxon attitude. “We only found it today. It’s as large as life, and twice as natural!”

“I always thought they were fabulous monsters!” said the Unicorn. “Is it alive?”

“It can talk,” said Haigha, solemnly.

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*

4.1 Introduction

The analytic process described in Chapter 3 yielded a considerable number of conceptual data categories. These were then incorporated into seven central themes:

- rationales for schools’ engagement with ‘children as researchers’ initiatives and their implementation (set-up)
 - resourcing available for the initiatives
 - participation of children and adults
 - ownership
 - voice
 - power
- and
- outcomes.

However, as will become apparent, these central themes are not mutually exclusive. Once these themes had been identified during the final stages of the analysis and coding process, it emerged that a substantial proportion of the data could be fitted into more than one central category. This highlights how many of the issues signified by each theme are often inextricably interrelated and how they work together to create particular circumstances and experiences. An overtly thematic presentation of the data, therefore, is felt to be too simplistic and risks obscuring the complexities of the data. Also, as mentioned in the previous chapter, had the analytic processes involved in the use of NVivo7 been adhered to throughout, these complexities might not have emerged.

Instead, data generated through participatory activities during focus groups with the young researchers and their peers is presented first, supported, where pertinent, by data drawn from the discussion element of these sessions. This is followed by presentation of the questionnaire data. The final section attends to both adult interview data and further data from the focus group discussions. These are displayed under headings which recognise and respect the children's own identification of significant factors. Organising the chapter in this way allows the interrelated nature of the central themes to be demonstrated more easily and informs the staged construction of a model of the processes at play during the children's engagement as active researchers in English primary schools.

Thus, the interpretation of findings is not resolutely tied to the discrete sets of data but is linked within and across these as appropriate. While strengthening the argument being developed, such a structure has further advantages. It allows comparisons and contrasts between the schools to be made more easily than in a case by case account and helps to avoid unnecessary repetition.

4.2 Categorisation of participants

Table 4.1 shows how participants are categorised in this chapter.

Participant*	Role	Affiliation	Setting*
YR	<i>Young researcher</i>		School name
Peer	<i>A child in the same class or year group as the young researchers</i>		School name
First initial	Class teacher		School name
First initial	Class teacher/facilitator		School name
First initial	Headteacher		School name
First initial	Facilitator	CRC (Children's Research Centre)	School name
First initial	Facilitator	External organisation	School name
First initial	Facilitator	Independent	School name

*All names and first initials have been changed

TABLE 4.1 The categorisation of participants

It should be noted that the children's own spellings have been respected throughout and that they are reproduced as written originally.

4.3 Analysis and discussion of the data from the participatory activities

This section examines the data generated with the child participants who took part in the three participatory methods: ‘Diamond Ranking’ (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998b), ‘Cups and Counters’ (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998b, O’Kane, 2000) and ‘brainstorming’. The findings from this data are discussed in relation to the different aspects of the CaR initiatives in the schools concerned. Consideration is given as to how these aspects are likely to have informed the choices children made when they engaged in the participatory activities.

4.3.1 ‘Diamond Ranking’ activities (Pagoda and Tower schools)

‘Diamond Ranking’ activities were carried out at Pagoda and Tower as, in these schools, sufficient time was allocated for focus groups to be held with the young researchers. As explained in Chapter 3, data generated through these activities has been treated primarily as qualitative. Nevertheless, complementary quantitative analysis has facilitated further exploration of the data (Tukey, cited in Robson, 2002:399), helping to inform both within- and across-case analysis. The necessary conditions for approaching qualitative data in this way during grounded theory style analysis have been met: counting is based on members’ own categories’ (Silverman, 2000:185) and the concepts used arise directly from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It is important to remember that ‘least important’ is not synonymous with ‘unimportant’ – all the statements used during ‘Diamond Ranking’ activities have been identified by young researchers as important.

4.3.1.1 Ranking the original statements

The children were asked: *What is the most important thing about becoming a researcher in a primary school?* To answer this question, the children ranked statements given by an earlier cohort of young researchers at Archway (Bucknall, 2005).

By allocating a number of points to each row of statements on a ‘Diamond Ranking’ activity sheet, it is possible to gain a majority view of the relative importance attributed to each statement by the children. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 chart how the children at Pagoda and

Tower, working individually, ranked the statements. Since majority views reached in this way mask the opinions of individual children, care has been taken to display the data in a way which is sensitive to both.

Without the data generated through other methods unsafe assumptions about the children's ranking decisions might be made. For example, it is clear that even when children have ranked issues as very important this does not necessarily mean that they have direct experience of them but instead have been able to consider what might have been. It had been explained to the children that other researchers adopting this method have used completed sheets as a basis for discussion (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998b) and, since it had become apparent that there would be insufficient time in which to talk with the children individually, it was proposed that this might be done within the focus group. However, some children identified potential difficulties in discussing their views in this context.

[...] sometimes if it's in a group, people hold back their feelings and say they agree with someone else, but they have something else they want to say and when you are doing it individually you can let it all out instead of keeping things bottled up. (YR, Tower)

[...] and then you are sort of in that place where you think, well, I think this, but I really want to fit in with them. (YR, Pagoda)

Although the consensus views of each group do differ, there is clear agreement on the three issues felt to be most important: opportunities for dissemination, being provided with information before the start of the project, and having a choice about becoming a member of the group. The children at Pagoda were able to present their findings to their headteacher and the external agency and then, later, to the whole school; the children at Tower did not have these opportunities. The second and third ranked statements also relate to things which did not happen in either of the schools. This suggests that the activity prompted the children to think about issues which had not occurred to them previously.

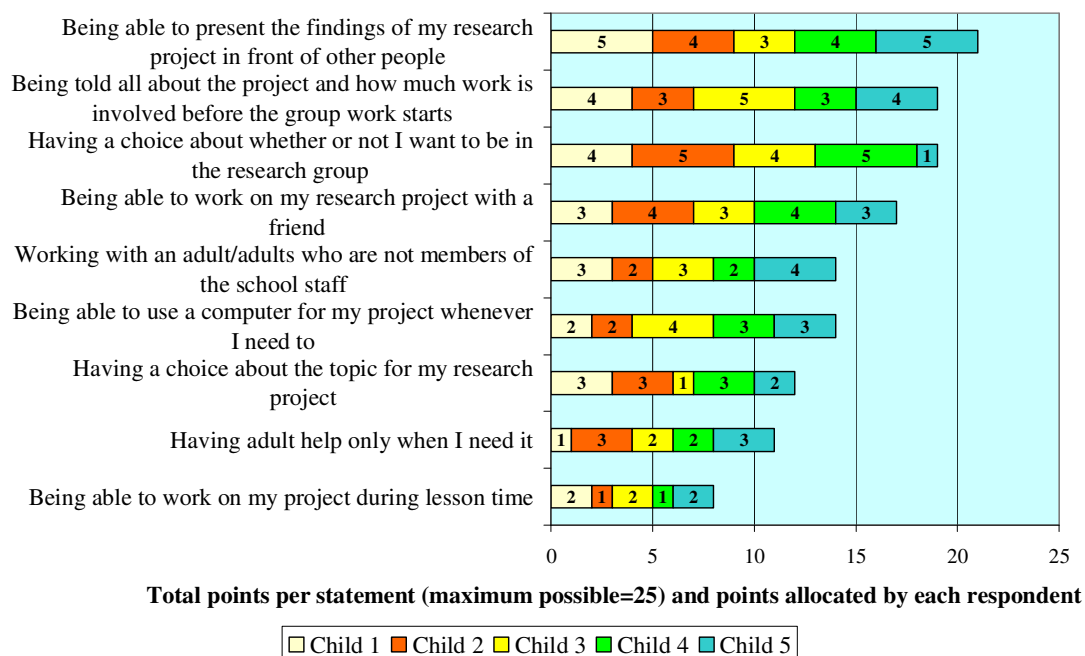


FIGURE 4.1 Young researchers' ranking of statements used for the individual 'Diamond Ranking' exercise: Pagoda School (n=5)

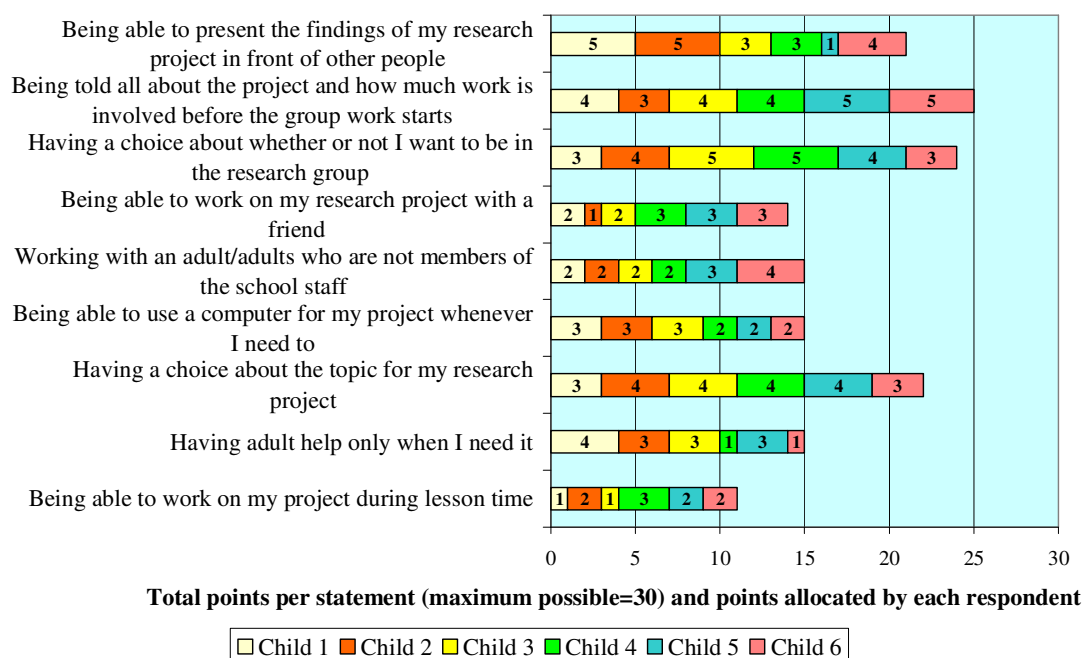


FIGURE 4.2 Young researchers' ranking of statements used for the individual 'Diamond Ranking' exercise: Tower School (n=6)

Although the original statements did not relate to their own experiences, it seems significant that the children felt the issues described were important. That both groups also

agreed on the ‘least important’ factor as being able to carry out their research work during lesson time might be expected. For these children, this was a given; they had not had to adapt to working in their lunch breaks as had the cohort who generated the original statements who had rather mixed feelings about this: while some did not mind working in their lunch break, others saw this as a sacrifice (Bucknall, 2005).

The difference in opinions between the groups about choosing research topics might also relate to their different experiences. The children at Pagoda could choose their topics only within a set theme which had been externally imposed by the agency responsible for setting up the project. Their expectations may have been limited by this. They did, however, have a wide choice within this theme as no other restrictions were imposed. Children at Tower, however, had been given a free choice of topic and seem to have valued this.

As the interview data presented later in this chapter shows, in both schools those adults directly involved in children’s research training and support adopted sensitively judged facilitative roles. It is difficult to tell from the results of this activity if the children in both schools considered this to be relatively unimportant since they may not have contemplated other ways of working. This also applies to the issue of working with friends: at Pagoda, the children worked in pairs and felt this to be important; at Tower, the children chose their research topics, and worked, individually and are less likely to have considered this an issue.

4.3.1.2 Generating young researcher’s own statements

Discussions following the initial ranking exercise revealed that the young researchers in both schools felt ranking other children’s statements to be problematic:

[...] if it was my statements, I would do completely different answers. (YR, Pagoda)

[...] there are different parts of it that you don't get [...] they are not what I think. (YR, Tower)

Consequently, the groups generated their own sets of statements (a full account of how this was done is given in Section 3.6.6).

The children's own statements reflect similarities and differences between the groups and are shown in Table 4.2. Statements that appear to have a similar focus are grouped together, allowing comparisons to be made between each of the two groups and between the new and original statements. It seems inevitable that the children's own statements were influenced by the originals; this sometimes seems to be reflected not only in their focus but also in a similarity of phrasing. Nevertheless, these unplanned opportunities for the children to devise their own statements generated useful data.

Because the children in this study chose not to discuss their ranking decisions, preferring instead to evaluate this method as a way of eliciting their views, qualitative analysis here is necessarily limited to the children's newly-generated statements. However, comments made by the children during the discussion elements of the focus groups are presented here where they help to illustrate and/or confirm the importance the children attached to the issues identified.

The acquisition of knowledge and skills, increased self-esteem and the ability to disseminate their work were identified as significant outcomes of the children's research experience. Yet, scrutiny of the statements reveals that, for the children, the most important factors influencing these tended to be those relating to their research training and the facilitation of their research rather than the outcomes of their research *per se*. It is possible that this might have been due to the children drawing on the original statements used for the activity. However, further focus group data confirm these factors as being of genuine importance to the children. Their identification here highlights issues which have the potential to act as barriers to children's active engagement in research process.

Statements generated by earlier cohort*	Newly-generated statements	
	Pagoda School (n=5)	Tower School (n=6)
Having the choice about whether or not I want to be in the research group	<i>Getting a say</i>	<i>To have a choice about being in the research group</i>
Having a choice about the topic for my research	<i>To be happy and comfortable with the research you are doing</i>	<i>Being able to choose and feel happy with my own research question so it will help me gather the information I need</i>
Being able to present the findings of my research project in front of other people	<i>Being able to tell teachers, adults and children what you have found out</i>	<i>Being able to present my work to other people and feel proud</i>
Working with an adult/adults who are not members of the school staff	<i>Working with people you don't know as well as with your friends</i>	<i>To be able to work with people from outside school</i>
Being able to work on my research project with a friend		<i>To be able to work in a group and share ideas and your reasons for them</i>
		<i>Being able to work individually and carrying out my own ideas</i>
Having adult help only when I need it		<i>Being able to get help from my friend or teacher when I need it</i>
Being told all about the project and how much work is involved before the group work starts	<i>Knowing what you are doing the research for</i>	
	<i>Understanding what research is and knowing what to do</i>	<i>Knowing how to find out and analyse the information I need to answer my question</i>
	<i>Learning different skills and interesting things</i>	
	<i>Getting enough time to do the work</i>	
	<i>Hearing what younger people think as well as older people</i>	
		<i>Becoming more confident and not feeling shy</i>
Being able to work on my project during lesson time		
Being able to use a computer for my project whenever I need to		

*Bucknall (2005)

TABLE 4.2 A comparison of original and newly-generated statements applied during 'Diamond Ranking' activities (in response to being asked *What is the most important thing about being a young researcher in a primary school?*)

In both schools, for example, it was the children's teachers who made the decisions about membership of the research groups.

The first time that we ever found out, it was in assembly and we were all just sitting there and [headteacher] called out our names and we all thought we were in trouble. (YR, Pagoda)

Our names were on the board in the morning, yeah? And in the afternoon, when we came from lunch, [teacher] called out our names and we had to go down to the Literacy Room. (YR, Tower)

Where the children have indicated having a choice about membership as important, this extended only to 'opting out' if they wanted to; neither they nor their peers had the chance to 'opt in'. The opportunity to be a member of each group was in the gift of their teachers.

The new sets of statements allowed the activity to be repeated in each school at a later date. At this time the group at Pagoda included the member of the group who had been absent for the original focus group. Figure 4.3 shows how these young researchers ranked their own set of statements. As explained in Section 3.6.6, the completed activity sheets from Tower were lost in the post.

It is immediately apparent that 'getting a say' is seen as crucial, with three of the six children placing this in top position and the other three on the second row of statements. This might confirm the importance the children placed on having a choice about belonging to the research group. It might refer to their role in school of facilitating the voices of other children (especially as hearing the views of children is ranked third). Or it might refer to making their own decisions about different elements of their own research projects. These possibilities are suggested here as they arise in other data but these suggestions can be only tentative since discussion with the children was not possible. The activity sheets were sent to, and returned from the school, by post and it was not possible to discuss the statements with the children at a later date. Although this places some limitations on the interpretation of this data, it is reasonably clear that, for the children from Pagoda, having opportunities

to make their views known was key. Whether they considered it also important to have their voices listened to and/or acted upon, however, is not explicit and cannot be legitimately inferred from this statement.

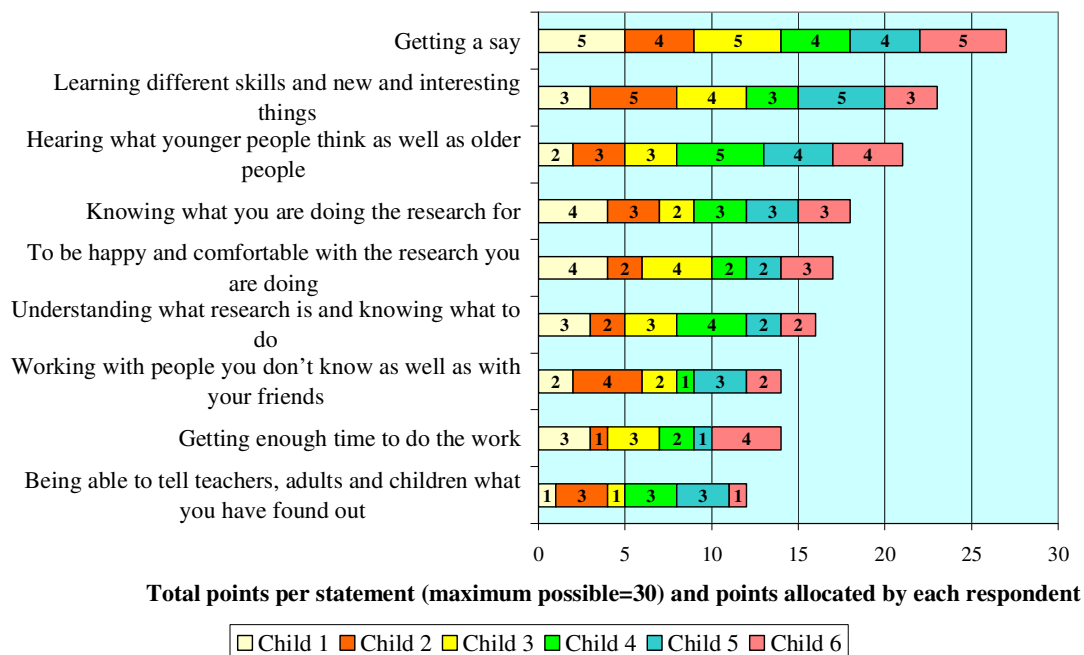


FIGURE 4.3 Young researchers' ranking of statements used for the individual 'Diamond Ranking' exercise: Pagoda School (n=6)

It seems significant that the children at Pagoda have identified, and ranked relatively highly, *knowing what you are doing the research for*. Their initiative was initiated by an external agency. This meant that, from the outset, there was a clear and identified purpose for the children's research and this appears to be a positive factor. Yet, being able to tell others what they had found out is, this time, ranked as the least important factor. That the remainder of the children's own statements are ranked more highly confirms that they considered other aspects of the research process as more important.

4.3.2 Cups and counters (Pagoda and Tower schools)

As with the ‘Diamond Ranking’ activities, the ‘cups and counters’ activity was carried out in the two schools where sufficient time was allocated for focus groups to be held with the young researchers.

As explained in Chapter 3, this activity was an adaptation of a method used by Thomas and O’Kane (1998b). It provided some indication of how the young researchers and their peers felt about their degree of involvement in the research groups. During this activity, some children again expressed their preference for being able to communicate their opinions in a way which was relatively private, perhaps something which is even more important when ‘feelings’ are the focus of the exercise:

Say someone actually didn’t want to do it and everyone else as like oh yeah I really wanted to do that and you are like the only person [...] you get really embarrassed and then it would be like you wouldn’t say it to anyone so it’s like a better way for them [...] because all you have to do is put them in, put the counters in the pot. It’s the easy way. (Peer, Tower)

A different range of ‘feelings’ was available for each question, as appropriate. Those from which the children could choose were categorised as ‘positive’, ‘negative’, ‘neither’ or ‘not sure’. As explained previously, these were not subjectively assigned but classified according to the results of an exercise carried out with forty-eight children in another school. Each emotion was identified as belonging to one of these composite categories if it had been identified as such by more than half the children. None of the emotions in the ‘not sure’ category met this criterion which was consequently discarded. A comprehensive breakdown of the children’s responses can be found in Appendix D. The three remaining categories were applied during the analysis of responses to all the questions asked during this activity.

The young researchers at both Tower and Pagoda were asked to respond to three questions using the ‘cups and counters’ method; their peers, one. Both groups were asked to divide

their six counters amongst the pots to indicate the strength of their feelings. The number of counters in each pot was counted and an aggregate score was given for the pots representing ‘positive’, ‘negative’ and ‘neither positive nor negative’ feelings in response to each question. These aggregate scores were then converted into percentages by calculating the number of counters allocated to each type of feeling as a percentage of the total number of counters.

4.3.2.1 Young researchers

The first question the young researchers in each school were asked was *How did you feel when you found out you had been chosen to be a member of the research group?*. The results are shown in Figure 4.4.

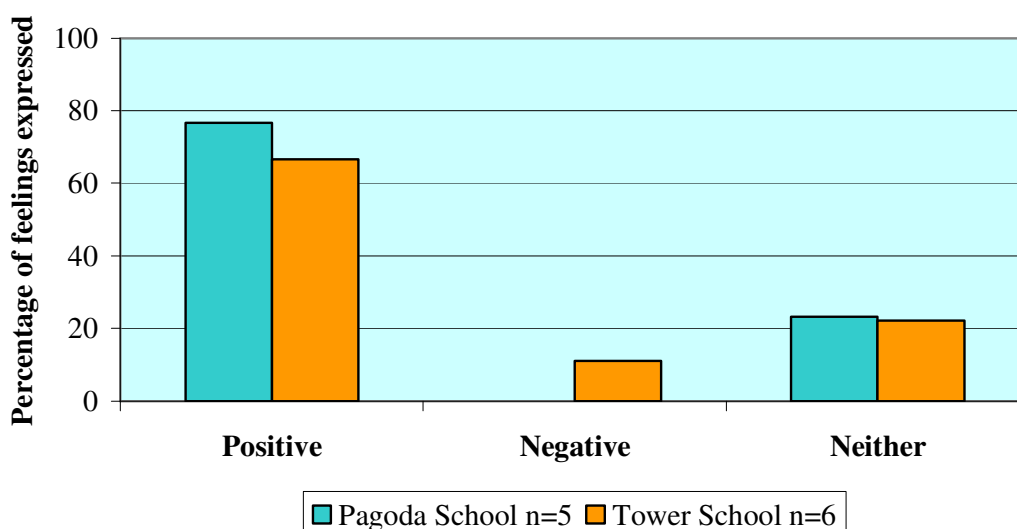


FIGURE 4.4 Feelings expressed by young researchers about being chosen to be members of their school’s research group

For most of the children, despite the lack of choice given about belonging to their research groups, their experiences were largely positive:

I felt happy because it was like we were special, we were like the special ones. (YR, Tower)

Actually I feel like, feel like grateful because I have been chosen and like not everyone gets to be picked. (YR, Pagoda)

However, the positive feelings experienced by the children seem to have been mediated somewhat by the lack of preliminary information about the CaR initiatives:

[...] we didn't really know and understand when the teachers said, like, 'You are going to be researchers', we were just like, 'Ohh God!'. So it was like that really. (YR, Pagoda)

*[The headteacher] was like, telling us we were going to be researchers and we were, like, 'What's researchers?' and 'What [...] would we do?'.
(YR, Pagoda)*

The data here corroborates similar findings from the 'Diamond Ranking' activities.

The second question asked of the young researchers was *How did you feel about other children not being able to be part of the research group?*. The children's responses are shown in Figure 4.5.

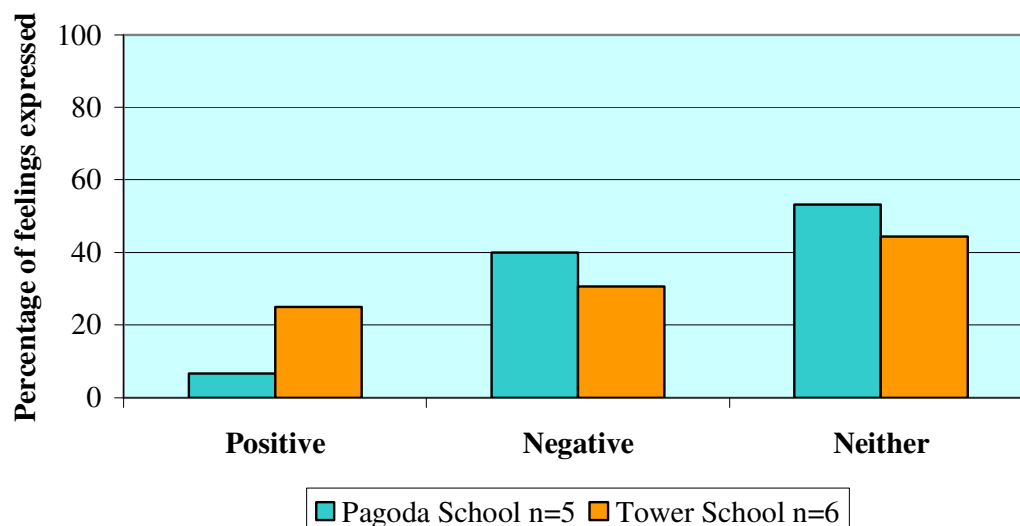


FIGURE 4.5 Feelings expressed by young researchers about their peers not being able to be part of their school's research group

As might be expected, few children felt positive about their peers being excluded from their school's research group. The children at Tower expressed some regret about this but were fatalistic about the circumstances in which they found themselves to be members of the group, acknowledging a tendency for the same children to be repeatedly selected by their teachers for out of the ordinary activities:

I felt sorry for the other children in the class because they never got picked out. (YR, Tower)

It's the teacher's decision. (YR, Tower)

When you think about it, it's not really our fault that we always get chosen for things, we don't tell the teachers to choose us. (YR, Tower)

Although the children at Pagoda did not address the issue of being the 'chosen ones' they, like the children at Tower, had been aware of some potential difficulties in peer relations associated with being a member of the group.

Some people were telling us like, "How come it's always you that gets chosen for everything?". (YR, Tower)

Well, they didn't tell us how they felt but they showed it to us [...] they showed a bit of jealousy. (YR, Tower)

We sometimes sound like we are boasting because we go, 'We are doing this! We are doing this!' and then people go, 'Just be quiet!'. (YR, Pagoda)

On reflection, they were not only able to attribute reasons for these reactions,

I think that's because you had more time to do something and they didn't. Like, 'cause they had to do a lot of work [...] and we did a lot of work but it was in a fun way. (YR, Tower)

but also to consider why they, and not their peers, might have been selected:

[...] it's also because some of us have got really good talents like I'm not saying we are [...] better than everyone [...] but I'm just saying we will be able to cope with a lot more pressure. (YR, Tower)

We were chosen 'cause of good behaviour. (YR, Pagoda)

This appears to link with the exclusion of some peers being seen as positive, particularly at Tower:

Not all of the people in our class you can trust them 'cause some people are actually really really silly. (YR, Tower)

For these groups, though, negative peer reactions did not appear to be sustained over time and were not seen by the young researchers as a major concern:

We just nearly forgot about it because all of us was happy inside and we didn't let anybody get us down. (YR, Tower)

[...] eventually they got over it. (YR, Tower)

Indeed, according to the children carrying out the research, their peers' initial negative reactions even changed over time as they began to realise how much work was involved and how they could be included:

[my friends] were pushed away from me in ways but when they understood how much work I had got to do with it and, um, find out what my topic was about and I needed to concentrate most on it, we actually became closer. (YR, Tower)

[...] when we interview them, then they'll go, 'Oh, yeah, I've been interviewed and all my data is going to be put up', and so at first we thought 'Oh yes, this is going to be all about us' and then we found out it was going to be everybody and it was, like, more fun [...] because you felt you'd got more views of things so was, like, open [...]. (YR, Pagoda)

Negative reactions from the young researchers' peers might be attributed to uncertainty about why some children, and not others, were chosen to be members of the research groups (especially if they were seen as the ones that are 'always' chosen). Lack of understanding about what the children were taking on, and what this might have involved for the year groups or schools as a whole, may also have been a contributory factor. These difficulties are likely to have been exacerbated by the shortage of prior information about the initiative and also by a lack of openness on the part of the adults involved about how groups were selected. These issues were identified during analysis of the interview data and are discussed in Section 4.5.

The young researchers were then asked *How do you feel now that your research project is finished?*. Largely positive responses by the children at Tower supported their previous

encouraging comments about their experiences although it is noted that there were some reservations (see Figure 4.6).

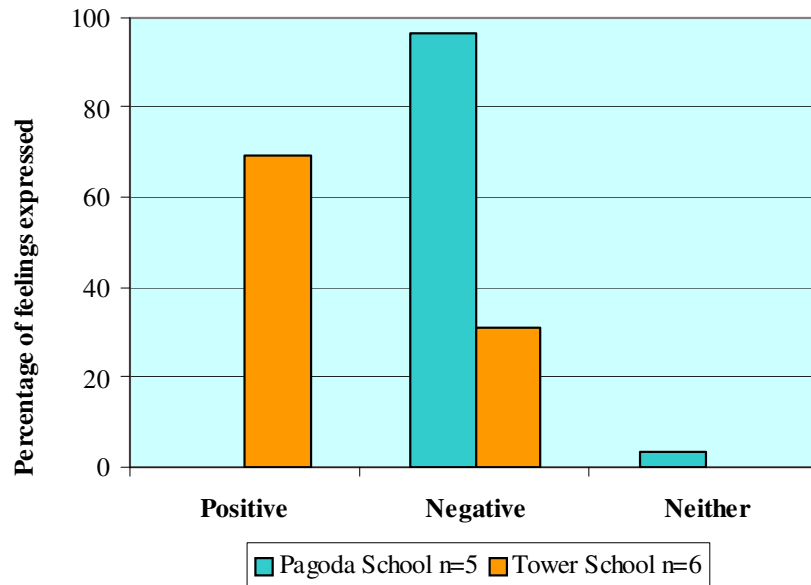


FIGURE 4.6 Feelings expressed by young researchers regarding the completion of their research projects

For the children at Pagoda, however, the responses seemed surprising until further questioning revealed the reasons for their unhappiness:

- *I nearly cried when it finished.*
- *None of us wanted it to finish.*
- *I wish we could carry on.* (YRs, Pagoda)

This highlights the importance of supplementing this method with an element of discussion since the instrumentation alone does not necessarily uncover the nuances of what the children felt.

4.3.2.2. Peers

The peers of the young researchers were asked *How did you feel when you found out you had not been chosen to be a member of the research group?* (see Figure 4.7).

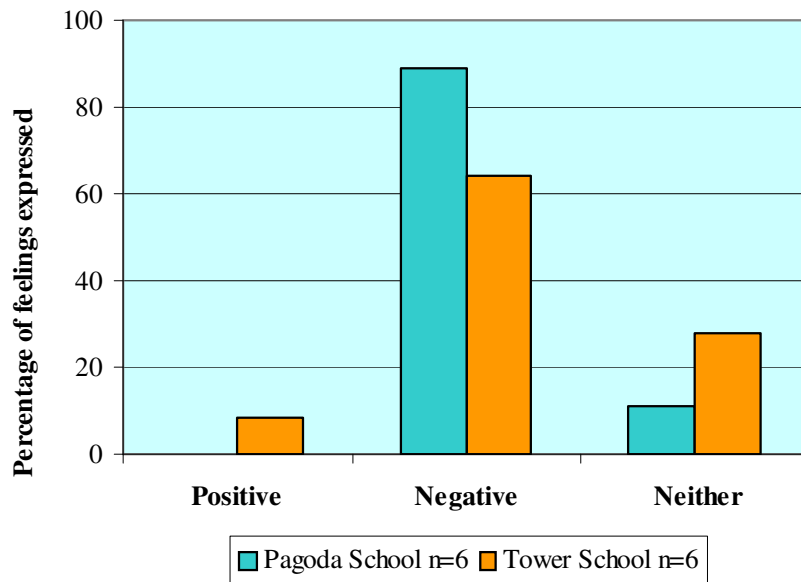


FIGURE 4.7 Feelings expressed by young researchers' peers about not being chosen to be members of their school's research group

While less than 10 percent of children at Tower did not mind at all that they had not been selected,

I didn't really mind what was going on. I would have liked to have known because I'm very nose. (Peer, Pagoda)

I felt OK, it's not to make a big deal out of something, so I just felt OK. (Peer, Tower)

responses to this question were largely negative, particularly at Pagoda. For some of these children, issues of fairness were paramount:

You see my best friend was in it and it felt a bit like, it was just like particularly in choosing just, was it six people to do it and it was just leaving everybody else out [...] it just feels that everybody's left out. (Peer, Pagoda)

They always pick the same old people. [...] they should choose different people, yeah, they should say not you, you did it last time, let someone else have a go. (Peer, Tower)

I felt very disappointed because a lot of the same kids were, like, I've never took part in the school council or any of those kinds of stuff and I was thinking that I might get chosen 'cause I've never took part in stuff. (Peer, Tower)

Altruism, too, appeared to play a part for some children:

Even if you get picked, you know if I got picked, right, well in a way I would still feel guilty because of all the other people who would really love to go and wouldn't be able to get a chance to do it and I would feel like I have to say sorry to all the other children who didn't get a turn. (Peer, Tower)

For others, it was the organisation of the initiative that was the root of the problem, especially so at Pagoda where the young researchers had received research training at two different out-of-school venues. The privileges seen to be afforded to them were a cause of annoyance or envy:

I was a bit envious because [...] it's like we were missing out on a treat because we have to sit there in Literacy doing writing and they're going round [city] looking at buildings. What would you prefer to do? (Peer, Pagoda)

You could tell other people were getting annoyed because like when you watch people going in town and they were just sitting there with a face on [...]. (Peer, Pagoda)

In contrast, negative feelings at Tower may have been moderated because, at the time of data collection, these children had just started a whole-class CaR initiative. During the previous school year, however, only a few of their classmates had been part of the research group:

*I didn't really want to be [a member of the research group] but I just felt left out, that's what I felt.
(And how do you feel now that you are taking part in the whole class?)
I feel really excited and I feel really happy and now I don't feel left out any more and I feel this work is really interesting. (Peer, Tower)*

I feel really excited and happy that we are all going to do it together. At least this time we are not leaving anyone out, so it's fair. (Peer, Tower)

For one child, not being selected was initially a positive experience but he felt less threatened once he knew more about what was involved and his whole class were gaining research experience:

I felt like I didn't know what was going on, like [E, external facilitator] said something about young researchers. I just felt like my head was going to explode. He's going to choose me, he's going to choose me and I don't know what he is doing! I felt really frightened.

(Did you? Because you didn't want to be chosen or ...?)

'Cause I didn't want to be chosen at that time. (Peer, Tower)

It is clear that, for the young researchers and their peers in both schools, emotions associated with the selection of members of the research groups did not necessarily relate directly to the opportunity to acquire research skills and carry out independent research. Instead, they appeared to relate to feelings of being special and, at Pagoda, to privileges seen to be afforded to the young researchers. That fairness should be seen to prevail was important. It appears that until or unless children were directly involved in their own research activities they were not able to see that there might be benefits other than being one of the 'chosen few' or outings from school. This again seems to indicate that children suffered a lack of prior information about what the initiative might involve.

4.3.3 Brainstorming activities (Archway [Cohort 1] and Rotunda schools)

Brainstorming activities were carried out with two groups of young researchers, first with a small group at Archway (Cohort 1) and then again with twelve children (in two groups of six) from the whole class young researchers initiative at Rotunda. Two questions were posed: *What do you think are the most important things about becoming a young researcher in a primary school?* and *What were the problems associated with becoming young researchers in your school?*. (The latter question was asked only after ascertaining that the children did think there had been some problems). The themes which emerged from the analysis of the children's responses are shown, along with illustrative examples, in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. It is notable here that there is more emphasis, by both

cohorts, on the outcomes of their research experiences rather than on the processes involved. This is contrary to the findings from the 'Diamond Ranking' statements generated by the young researchers at Pagoda and Tower. Nonetheless, there are also parallels which can be drawn between the two sets of data.

All the children who took part in the brainstorming sessions, for example, identified increased knowledge and skills as outcomes of their research. Not unexpectedly, for the children at Rotunda, increased knowledge was directly related to their own topics. In this class, great value was placed on the importance of the children researching an issue which was of personal significance. At Archway, where the emphasis was on research process as provision for more able children, the children's identification of increased knowledge related only to the research process. During the brainstorming session, the children at Rotunda also made frequent mention of ethics. This, too, appears to relate to the freedom the children were offered in choosing their topics. Many of those chosen related to difficulties they had encountered in their lives which were very sensitive (and perhaps not unrelated to the increased self-awareness which they also identify). The need to debate ethical considerations had been a priority in their class.

Again at Rotunda, there was relatively more emphasis on the development of curriculum skills across several subjects: here, the CaR initiative was embedded in the curriculum. At Archway, where the children were more academically able, only increased ICT skills were identified as a curriculum-based outcome. This suggests that the rationales adopted by different schools for engaging in the initiatives had an impact on the outcomes, at least as seen by the children.

Archway (n=4)	Rotunda (n=12)
Enjoying the process <i>It's fun and gives you a good feeling. You get lots of adrenaline and it's rewarding.</i> <i>It gave me something to do and I had a good time doing it.</i>	Enjoying the process <i>Having fun with your research.</i> <i>Enjoying yourself whilst doing it.</i> <i>You've got to enjoy yourself.</i>
Increased knowledge <i>I learned things I wouldn't learn in class.</i> <i>The training helped me understand some weird words.</i> <i>We learnt what different vocabulary meant.</i>	Increased knowledge <i>Learning more about your topic.</i> <i>Discovering things.</i> <i>I know now that other people, um, feel the same way as I do.</i>
Developing research skills. <i>The training was helpful for future research.</i> <i>It helped us to know how to research out topic and present it.</i> <i>Good training. We were taught important skills.</i>	Developing research skills <i>Keeping it sceptical [and] systematic.</i> <i>I think ethics is really important because you have to learn not to hurt peoples' feelings.</i> <i>Not everyone (participants) will want to do it even though you reassure them.</i>
Developing curriculum skills <i>I learnt lots about computers</i>	Developing curriculum skills <i>Helps you with your ICT and maths.</i> <i>And reading because we have to go to the library.</i> <i>You learnt maths.</i> <i>ICT skills, English, science because of the tables.</i>
Increased self-esteem <i>It's good for children to do research because it makes them feel more confident in later life.</i> <i>Helped me realise what potential I have in life.</i> <i>Gave me a sense of responsibility and ability to talk to people.</i> <i>Gave me confidence for later life.</i>	Increased self-esteem <i>It builds your confidence.</i> <i>Being proud of yourself.</i> <i>The second time I done it (presenting research) I was like, yeah, I'm going to do this now.</i>
	Increased self-awareness <i>Learning more about yourself.</i> <i>You need to learn more about yourself to do research. You need to learn about what your interests are.</i>
New experiences <i>It gave me a unique and special chance.</i>	New experiences <i>We got to like visiting new places and people</i> <i>You get to say "Hi" to new people</i>
	Working in partnership <i>Friendship.</i> <i>Like [...] worked together and I think that partnerships help in like, helps to get it done a bit quicker and plus, we get more ideas.</i>
Choice <i>Make sure you choose a good subject.</i> <i>Pick a subject you'll really like.</i> <i>Choose a good subject or else you get bored and drop out.</i>	

TABLE 4.3 Responses to questions about the most important things about becoming a young researcher in a primary school

Archway (n=4)	Rotunda (n=12)
Lack of time <i>With homework as well sometimes research got in the way.</i>	Lack of time <i>We need more time for it. If we had more time I think our research would have been improved.</i> <i>We were trying to do it quickly as well, so it went a bit confusing, well messy.</i> <i>Everyone was worrying if they was going to get it done in time.</i>
Timetabling arrangements <i>I got really annoyed with the project when I had to come out of good lessons.</i> <i>The training is boring because it goes on for too long.</i> <i>I forgot about the project completely over the holidays.</i>	Timetabling arrangements <i>Some people were worrying about the tests so they couldn't get on with their work and if they were worrying about their work they couldn't get on with SATs.</i>
Training <i>You will probably not like all the training.</i> <i>The training is boring because it goes on for too long.</i> <i>Rather spaced out sessions with tutor.</i>	Training <i>If we done it straight away like in one day I think it'll be better.</i> <i>I wanted to get rid of it but I just don't want to do it loads of days in a row. I did want to do it but I don't want to do [that].</i>
	Disagreements with partners <i>Because like say one person wants to do one topic but another person wants to do another topic.</i> <i>We broke up [...] 'cause we all wanted to do different things.</i>
Problems with research instruments <i>I think that many children did not want to fill in my questionnaire but felt it wouldn't be cool to say they didn't want to do it.</i>	Problems with research instruments <i>Where a lot of children needed [a policeman] for their topic I think we got five minutes each to interview him where we needed a lot more time than that.</i> <i>There was a lot of problems with contactees.</i>
	Problems with computers <i>Some people lost their USBs.</i> <i>A lot of people lost their work.</i> <i>There weren't enough computers.</i> <i>The printer kept running out of ink.</i>
Dissemination <i>The audience was too big.</i> <i>It would be good to talk to an audience that was interested!</i> <i>I didn't like presenting the work because I felt that many children were very bored.</i>	Dissemination <i>I was like a bit frightened at first because I didn't know who as going to be there.</i> <i>I was like (gulp) what's going to happen.</i> <i>Doing it here was alright but then realising it was a different school some people didn't want to do it.</i>
Feedback <i>I was disappointed when no-one cared about what I had done.</i> <i>I got almost no feedback.</i> <i>I got no feedback.</i>	

TABLE 4.4 Responses to questions about the problems associated with becoming a young researcher in a primary school

Like the young researchers at Pagoda who underwent research training at external venues, the children at Rotunda were taken out of school but, in this case, this was to disseminate their research to other children and teachers. They appear to have appreciated this opportunity although this seemed to relate to meeting new people rather than to actual dissemination. There is a distinct contrast between these positive experiences and those of the children at Archway whose only experiences of disseminating their work were in school and to an audience of their peers and teachers who they felt to be somewhat uninterested and from whom they received little feedback. Again, this suggests a relationship between the reasons why the children's schools engaged in the CaR initiatives (and, therefore, the purposes for the children's research) and the values which informed those decisions, especially in terms of the values the schools placed on pupil voice.

In common with the 'Diamond Ranking' activities, the brainstorming sessions identified lack of time to carry out the research and to complete projects as a significant factor. At Rotunda, where the activities were integrated into curriculum time and facilitated by the class teacher, shortage of time seems to have been a pervasive problem and one which the children deem to have both impacted on the quality of their work and on their preparation for the national Year 6 SATs. It seems to be the case that no matter how the research programme is instigated, externally imposed statutory testing is likely to be a factor that will have an impact on school-based CaR initiatives when these involve particular year groups.

At Archway, for example, research activities were separate from timetabled curriculum based lessons. This arrangement created different problems for the children, namely the pressures of extra homework and issues relating to being withdrawn from lessons. This was especially the case where an adult external to the school was responsible for the children's research training and support.

The organisation and structures of the research programmes facilitated in each of these two schools were very different. Nevertheless, the children in both have identified these factors as problematic. This appears to be related especially to the frequency and duration of their training. Again, the interview data presented in Section 4.5 supports these children's views, with different ways of working seen to present their own challenges, not least in relation to the practical issues such as those which the children raise here.

4.3.4 Summary of findings from the participatory activities

The main findings from the participatory activities are summarised in Table 4.5. This shows the positive and negative aspects and outcomes of their experiences reported by the young researchers at Archway, Pagoda, Rotunda and Tower.

Positive experiences and outcomes	Negative experiences and outcomes
Enjoyment	Lack of feedback after dissemination.
Having a say	Negative peer reactions
Being able to choose own research topics	Exclusion of peers from research groups
Having a purpose for their research	Paucity of prior information about the CaR initiatives
Working independently of adults	Teachers making choices about membership of the research groups
Being able to work/share ideas with friends if they wanted to	Timetabling arrangements
Working with people from outside school	Length of research training
Discovering others' opinions	Insufficient time to complete projects
Acquiring necessary skills and knowledge relating to research process	Pressures of eternally imposed testing
Increased curriculum skills	Increased workload
Increased confidence	Problems with research instruments
Increased self-awareness	Limited access to computers
Increased awareness of ethics	Technical difficulties relating to computer use
Disseminating research findings to interested parties.	Dissemination of research findings to disinterested parties

TABLE 4.5 Summary of findings from the participatory activities (Archway, Pagoda, Rotunda and Tower)

The peers of the young researchers identified two aspects of their experiences of CaR initiatives as negative. These were perceived unfairness relating to the selection of the research group members and 'missing out' on the perceived privileges of the research group members.

4.3.5 A preliminary model

The findings emerging from analysis of the participatory activities with the children at Archway, Pagoda, Rotunda and Tower and summarised above have informed the construction of a preliminary model of the factors impacting on, and processes involved in, CaR initiatives in these schools (Figure 4.8). This model illustrates the interrelated nature of the seven central themes identified during analysis of the qualitative data. Presented as shaded circles in the model, these are: *participation*, *voice*, *ownership*, *resources*, *outcomes*, *set-up* and *power*. The last of these is placed centrally since the findings from the participatory activities suggest that the influence of power is pervasive.

The arrangement of the six remaining themes in a circle creates six sectors. The factors and processes which the children have identified as being a significant part of their experiences are displayed within these sectors where appropriate. This arrangement thus makes explicit not only the relationships between the central themes but also those between these themes and the factors and processes identified. The latter have been extracted from the summary of findings presented in Table 4.5 (page 174).

As this is a preliminary model, these relationships between the central themes are shown by broken lines, with arrowheads added to indicate one- or two-way relationships as suggested by analysis of the participatory activities data. This model will be developed further in subsequent sections of this chapter to take into account findings which emerged from analysis of the remainder of the data.

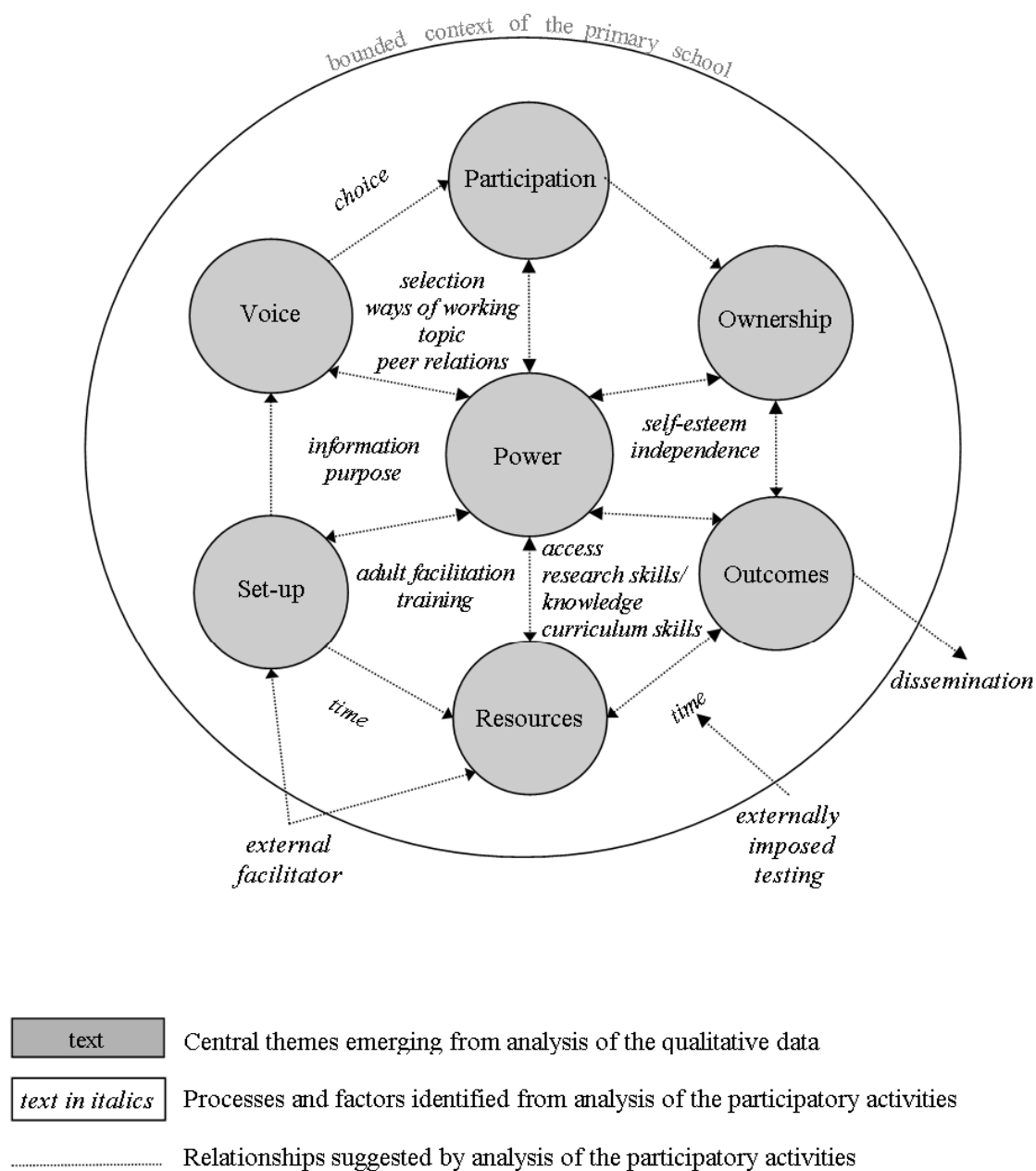


FIGURE 4.8 A preliminary model emerging from the participatory activity data: factors and processes which impact on children as researchers in primary schools

4.4 Analysis and discussion of the data from the questionnaires

This section examines data from questionnaires distributed to children in four of the five schools in this study. Two designs of questionnaire were used, one for young researchers and one for their peers although neither was used in all schools, as detailed below.

4.4.1 Child Questionnaire 1 (Archway, Bridge and Pagoda Schools)

A questionnaire (ChQ1, Appendix C) was distributed at Archway (Cohort 1), Bridge and Pagoda to all the children in the young researchers' peer groups except the young researchers themselves. The purpose of this questionnaire was to explore how aware the young researchers' peers had been about the research initiatives in their schools; to explore how they felt about not being included; to ask for their opinions on how young researchers in their schools should be selected, and to ascertain their thoughts about CaR initiatives more generally. It was not appropriate to use this questionnaire at Rotunda, where all the children in the year group were involved in the CaR initiative. Neither was it appropriate at Tower, where the peers of the children who had been young researchers the previous year were similarly involved.

Responses to open questions (Tables 4.6 - 4.12), have been inductively coded, categorised and enumerated so that the categories are listed in overall descending order of importance across the three schools. Differences between the schools are indicated by ranking positions calculated according to the frequency of responses coded for each category.

Figure 4.9 shows the various ways in which the young researchers' peers became aware of the research group activities. The children had the opportunity to identify alternative ways but, although some children took this up, their responses were found to fit within one of the existing categories.

As might be expected, the children's responses appear to relate directly to how the projects in each school were set up. At Archway, their teacher had selected the research group and

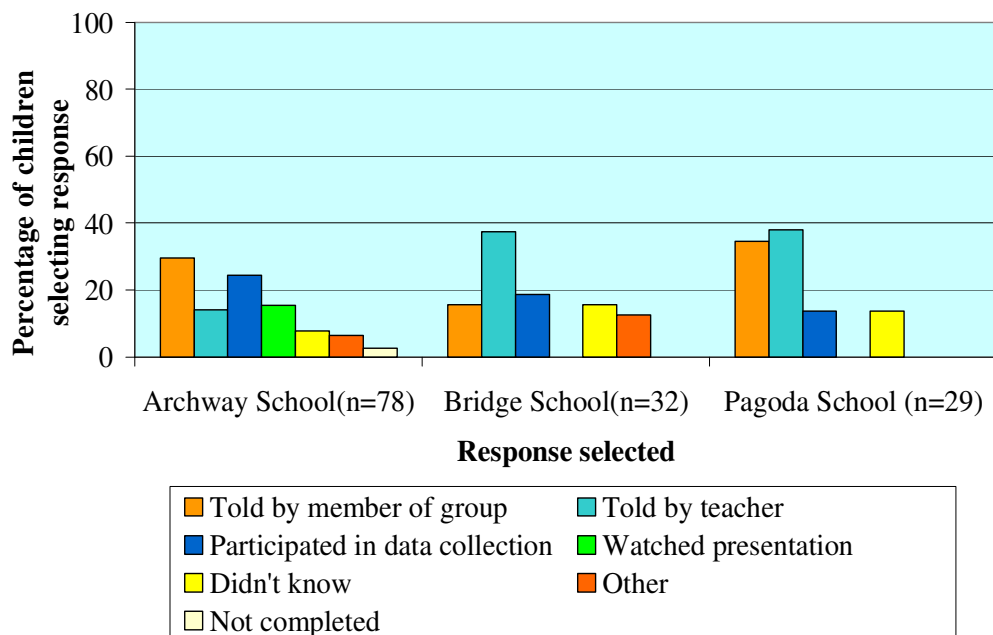


FIGURE 4.9 How children discovered that others in their peer group were undertaking research projects

no prior information was imparted to either the group or their peers. At this school, 69 percent of the non-involved peers responded to this question by indicating that they had been largely reliant on the young researchers themselves talking about what they were doing, being involved in their data collection or watching the children's research presentations. Only 14 percent of children at Archway claimed that they heard about the initiative from a teacher. At Bridge, the adult responsible for the training visited the school and told all the children in Year 6 about what was involved. Here, 37 percent of the children perceived themselves to have been told about the initiatives by a 'teacher'. (It is possible that the relatively large percentage (12 percent) of children selecting 'other' in this school considered an external adult to be other than a teacher). At Pagoda, all the children were told about the initiative in assembly and it was talked about quite openly within the school. This is reflected in the results: 72 percent of children claimed that they had found out about the initiative either from a teacher or a member of the research group. These findings clearly relate to the different ways in which the schools engaged with the CaR

initiatives and demonstrate that the adults involved in the CaR initiatives have a crucial role in passing on information to children.

The purpose of the second question was to see if children's awareness of the initiatives related to whether or not the children had any of the young researchers in their class. (Figure 4.10).

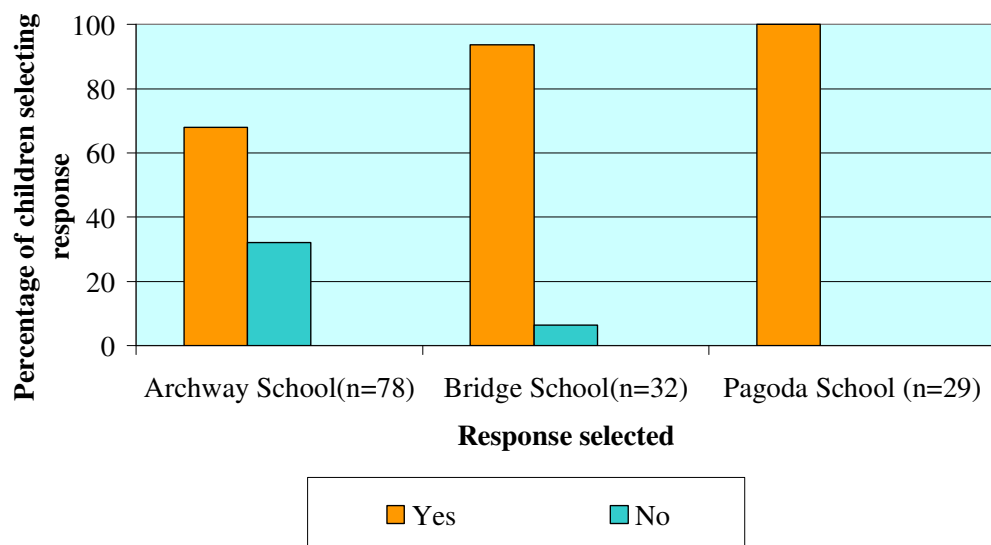


FIGURE 4.10 ‘Were any of the children [carrying out research projects] in your class?’

This was possible at all three schools, although, in the case of Bridge, only 16 percent of children claimed to have been told about the initiative by a member of the research group and 16 percent claimed not to know about it (see Figure 4.9) even though nearly all the children claimed to have a member of the research group in their class. At Archway, the young researchers came from only two of the three classes in their year group and this is reflected by the fact that just over two-thirds of children responded ‘yes’ to this question. Since a similar percentage (69 percent) of children at this school knew about the initiative either by being told by a member of the group, by taking part in data collection or by watching a presentation, this suggests that here the children disseminated information

about the initiative to each other. Only 14 percent of children claimed to have been told about the project by a teacher. At Pagoda, in contrast, although all of the children had young researchers in their class, a slightly higher percentage (38 percent) claimed to have found out about the initiative from a teacher rather than from a member of the research group (34 percent) and 14 percent claimed not to know about the initiative. The data from Pagoda indicates that even though children may have been in the same class as young researchers and may have been told about the groups by a teacher, a small minority still seemed to be unaware that this was taking place.

The third question was primarily designed to discover whether children had been offered the opportunity of belonging to the research group in their school. However, some responses to this question were unexpected. As Figure 4.11 shows, the children at Bridge were fairly evenly divided between those who considered they had had an opportunity to be involved and those who did not. This reflects the fact that membership of the research group at this school was offered only to those members of the vertically grouped Year 5/Year 6 class who were in Year 6.

Yet, for children at Archway and Pagoda, this was not the case. It was therefore surprising that many of the children indicated that they had been involved despite adult interview data verifying that in each school only a small group of children carried out their own research. With hindsight, this suggests that a likely reason for these unanticipated responses was a mismatch between the intended meaning of ‘involved’ and interpretations made by the children. It is clear from Figure 4.9 that, at Archway and Pagoda, 24 and 14 percent of children respectively claimed that they had participated in data collection. These children may, therefore, have considered that they had been given an opportunity to be involved in the research, even though they had not been chosen as members of a research group. Also, even though some children may not have participated in data collection, they still may

have been offered the opportunity to do so. Children's responses to subsequent questions (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7) indicate some of the reasons they gave as to why they did or did not want to be involved in the CaR initiative. This ambiguity around the meaning of 'involved' was not apparent during the piloting of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, this question generated some unexpected and useful data.

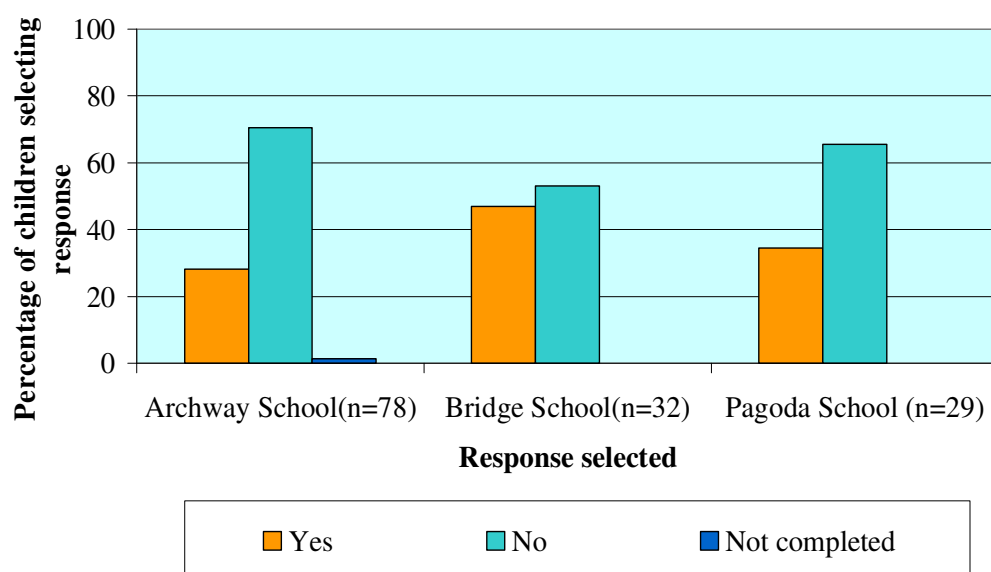


FIGURE 4.11 'Were you given the opportunity to be involved?'

Of those children at Bridge who completed the question *Would you like to have been involved?*, half indicated they would not like to have been involved in the initiative (Figure 4.12). These children were offered information about the project before it started and were offered a choice about membership of the research group; they knew what was involved in undertaking the training and the research. In contrast, at Archway and Pagoda, 60 and 83 percent of children respectively would like to have taken part. As the previous findings at Archway indicate, there seems to have been considerable peer-to-peer discussion and participation in data collection which may explain why so many children wanted to be involved. The high percentage of children at Pagoda who wanted involvement suggests

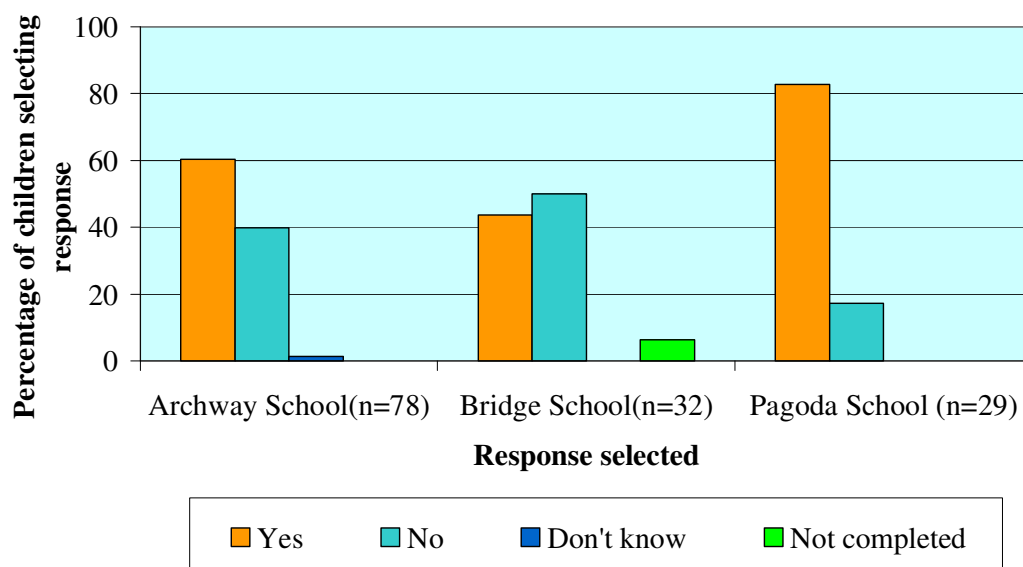


FIGURE 4.12 ‘Would you have liked to be involved?’

that they may have perceived the research activities as a ‘treat’ since the young researchers were taken out of school on more than one occasion. Also pertinent, perhaps, was that although these children were told about the project in an assembly, they were not provided with detailed information and fewer of them participated in data collection. They may, therefore, have been unaware of the potential workload.

Tables 4.6 and 4.7 show how children responded when asked to explain their answers to this question. As Table 4.6 shows, having been ‘involved’ or ‘taking part’ was one of the most frequently given response categories. As suggested above, it is reasonably clear that these children felt they had been ‘involved’ in the initiative through participation in the members of the research group’s data collection. Further support for this interpretation is provided by the reasons children gave for not wanting to be ‘involved’ (see Table 4.7). These children stated that this was because they did not want to reveal information about themselves. This raises an important question about what children count as participation.

Categories of children's own statements	Ranking (1 denoting most frequently cited reason)		
	Archway n=51	Bridge n=15	Pagoda n=23
Enjoyment <i>Because it would be fun to do it and interesting for me.</i> <i>Because it is boring to do school work every day and I like to do different things.</i>	1	1	1
To be involved <i>Because it was something for me to get involved in and to feel a part of something.</i> <i>Because I can be part of it and take part.</i>	2	-	2
Develop research skills <i>Because I think it would have been interesting to learn how to research properly and look at different peoples' opinions.</i> <i>Because I would like to learn how to research different things.</i>	5	2	4=
To explore own interests <i>I would like to have the power to do a research I want to do.</i> <i>Because I would like to find out more about things in my life.</i>	3	4=	5=
Time out of class <i>Because it cuts into classes..</i> <i>Because I wouldn't have to be in class all the time.</i>	7	4=	3
Opportunity to do something different <i>Because I have never done something like this before.</i> <i>Because it would be a really good chance to do it and [...]</i> <i>I probably would never get the chance again.</i>	4	-	4=
Future value <i>Because when I go to university I will have had some research experience.</i> <i>Because it is a very useful thing to be able to do and it's a good way of learning things.</i>	6	-	5=
To find out what people think <i>Because [...] it's good to know what people think.</i> <i>Because it will let me find out what people think.</i>	-	3	-
Develop curriculum skills <i>It would help me with my English.</i>	-	-	-

(- indicates no responses in this category)

TABLE 4.6 Why? (when response to 'Would you have liked to be involved?' is Yes)

Other responses identify both positive and negative issues that the children perceived to be associated with membership of the research groups. The former included enjoyment, the development of research and curriculum skills, opportunity, future value and increased knowledge; the latter, workload, lack of time and lack of topic choice. All these corroborate the responses given during participatory activities with the young researchers

and small groups of their peers at Pagoda, Tower, Archway and Rotunda. In addition, it is notable that the main reason why the children who completed the questionnaire did not

Categories of children's own statements	Ranking (1 denoting most frequently cited reason)		
	Archway n=33	Bridge n=12	Pagoda n=5
Lack of interest <i>This isn't my sort of thing. It's not what I enjoy doing.</i> <i>Because it doesn't appeal very much to me.</i>	1	1	1
Lack of time <i>It takes too much time.</i> <i>Because I already got homework [...] so would not have any time.</i>	3=	2	-
Workload <i>Because I have enough work on my hands already.</i> <i>Because you will have to do more work and homework.</i>	2	4=	2
Lack of skills <i>I do not do much research so I don't know how to do research very well.</i> <i>I'm not very good with computers.</i>	3=	4=	-
Other commitments <i>Because I already went to lots of clubs so it would have been a bit too much.</i> <i>There was other things I prefer doing.</i>	5=	3	-
Missing out on other activities <i>Because you [...] would miss most of your break time or lunch time.</i> <i>It takes a lot of time, you also miss good activities.</i>	5=	-	-
Privacy <i>Because I don't really want everybody to know about my life.</i> <i>Because if I was involved I would have to give stuff about myself.</i>	4	-	-
Not wanting to speak in public <i>Because I don't think I would of liked to present something.</i> <i>Because I don't really like doing things in front of people.</i>	5=	-	-
Possible lack of choice of topic <i>It depends on whether I get to choose what I research.</i>	6	-	-
Something for the future <i>Because I would like to do it when I'm older.</i>	6	-	-

(- indicates no responses in this category)

TABLE 4.7 Why? (when response to 'Would you have liked to be involved?' is No)

want to be involved was simply because research activities did not appeal to them. This further supports the other children's assertion that having a choice about belonging to the research group was important. Other negative assumptions (for example, lack of necessary skills) could perhaps have been addressed had the children been given sufficient

information about the purpose of the research training and support. However, although this might have increased the number of children wanting to take part in schools where the size of the CaR groups was restricted, this might have led to disappointment.

Responses to the question as to whether everyone should have had the chance to be involved was overwhelmingly positive. Being a young researcher is clearly perceived by most children as highly desirable as approximately three-quarters of children in each of the three schools answered ‘yes’ to this question (Figure 4.13). The primary explanation they gave for this when they were asked ‘why?’ (see Tables 4.8 and 4.9) concerned the issue of fairness. Here again, the questionnaire data corroborates that obtained from the participatory activities. Also, the responses provide further support that, for these children, ‘involvement’ meant participation in the research and again, they emphasised the need for choice.

Other reasons were given, too. At Pagoda and Bridge, the view that levels of ability should not preclude children from the activities was felt to be relatively important. Since the initiatives in these two schools were not explicitly seen as provision for the more able pupils, this poses a question about how the children perceived the abilities of those who belonged to the research groups. At Archway, where the research group members were all on the ‘Gifted and Talented’ register, issues relating to ability and selection were apparently less important. The data from the interviews (Section 4.5) revealed that the young researchers at this school were seen as exceptionally able. This may have meant both children and adults perceived research activities as beyond the capabilities of the majority.

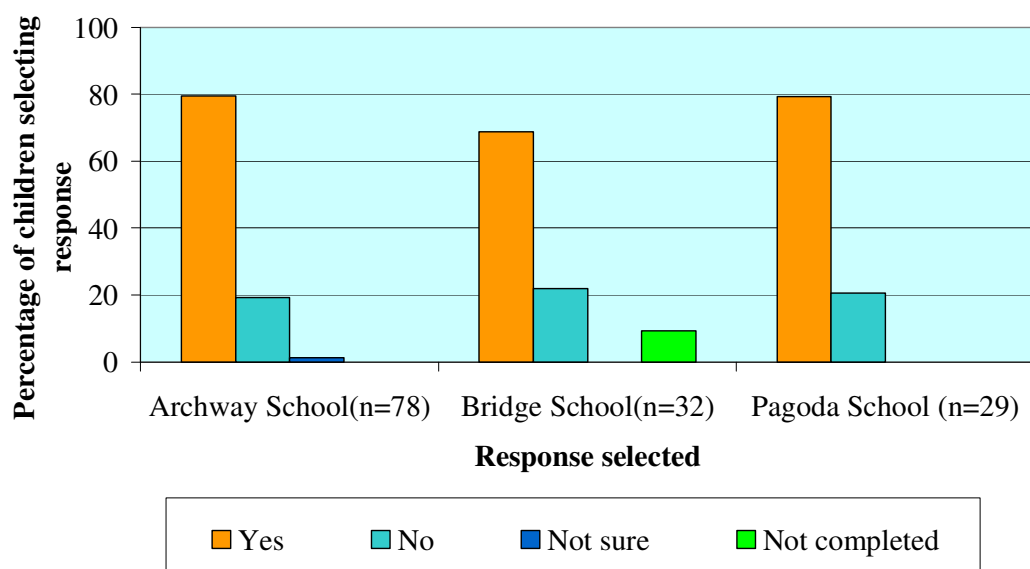


FIGURE 4.13 ‘Do you think everyone should have had the chance to be involved?’

Nevertheless, almost 80 percent of children at Archway considered wider membership of the research groups as desirable; one reason suggested for this was the potential for a wider range of research topics (Table 4.8). However, another 19 percent could see some problems which wider membership might prompt (Table 4.9), namely the difficulties of having a larger number of children in the school trying to collect data at the same time and the workload this might impose on their teachers and other adults. Findings here are similar to those at Rotunda which suggests that these issues are likely to be problematic where CaR is organised as a whole class initiative. Other young researchers also acknowledged these difficulties, however, even when only a small number were attempting to collect data within the confines of a school. As will be discussed later, this issue is exacerbated when children select questionnaires as a preferred method of data collection, suggesting that they need further encouragement to consider alternative methods.

Categories of children's own statements	Ranking (1 denoting most frequently cited reason)		
	Archway n=59	Bridge n=19	Pagoda n=22
Fairness <i>Because it would be fair and it's nice that everyone can be involved.</i> <i>Because it would not be fair on everybody else who wanted to do it if just a small group did it.</i>	1	1	1
Needs to be a choice <i>Only if you can say you want to do it!</i> <i>I think everyone should have a chance although not have to..</i>	2	3=	4=
Positive activity <i>Like me most properly thought it would be interesting.</i> <i>Because it would be fun for everyone to find out something new.</i>	4	2	2
Everyone is capable of doing it <i>Because everyone is smart.</i> <i>Because not only the clever people should get the chance to do things other people might like to do.</i>	5	3=	4=
Coverage of wider range of topics <i>They might bring up topics that would interest different people.</i> <i>Because lots of people might want to do it and there would be more subjects.</i>	3	-	-
To be able to work together <i>Then it can be something to do as a team.</i> <i>Because I would give people help in research.</i>	-	3=	-
Same children usually chosen <i>Because most of the time they pick the smart kids.</i> <i>Because some people who have never been involved in something should have a chance.</i>	-	-	3=
Need to evaluate activity <i>Because everyone should have a go to see if they liked.</i> <i>To give it a go.</i>	-	-	3=
Opportunity <i>Because it's only one opportunity to do this.</i> <i>Because some of us are in Year 6 and it is our last year for some of us.</i>	-	4	4=

(- indicates no responses in this category)

TABLE 4.8 Why? (when response to 'Do you think everyone should have had the chance to be involved?' is Yes)

Categories of children's own statements	Ranking (1=most frequently cited reason)		
	Archway n=13	Bridge n=7	Pagoda n=5
Not feasible <i>Because it would be quite a hassle if everyone was asking people to do questionnaires at the same time.</i> <i>Because of too many people.</i>	1	-	1=
Need for choice <i>Some people aren't interested in things like that and you can't force them to [...].</i> <i>Because people might not have wanted to do it.</i>	3	1	1=
Lack of enjoyment <i>Because some people might think it's boring.</i> <i>People might not like research.</i>	-	2	2
Too difficult <i>Because it would be too much hard.</i> <i>Because people might think that it is too hard to do.</i>	2	-	-
Perceived lack of ability <i>Because it is just for smart people.</i> <i>I think only people who are good at English should have the opportunity.</i>	4=	-	-
Time <i>Potentially a lot of stuff would have time taken up.</i> <i>Time.</i>	4=	3=	-
Danger of children dropping out <i>Because some people may have done then quit because then they would have let down the others.</i>	-	3=	-
Too much work for adults <i>It would have been too much work for the adult/adults.</i>	4=	-	-

(- indicates no responses in this category)

TABLE 4.9 Why? (when response to 'Do you think everyone should have had a chance to be involved?' is No)

The data presented in Figure 4.14 shows children's responses to the question designed to explore how young researchers' peers felt about not being involved. As this figure shows, the children who reported negative or positive emotions (32 percent, 41 percent and 48 percent respectively at Archway, Bridge and Pagoda) were outnumbered in all three schools by those who expressed emotions that were categorised as neither negative nor positive or who did not mind either way (68 percent, 59 percent and 52 percent respectively) (see Section 4.3 and Appendix D for clarification of how these composite emotions were categorised). This suggests that, although the majority of children thought everyone should have had the opportunity to be involved (Figure 4.12), they did not

necessarily mind that they were not selected. At Pagoda, however, the strength of negative feelings (33 percent) is notable, corroborating data from the participatory activities which showed some resentment towards the preferential treatment seen to be given to the young researchers.

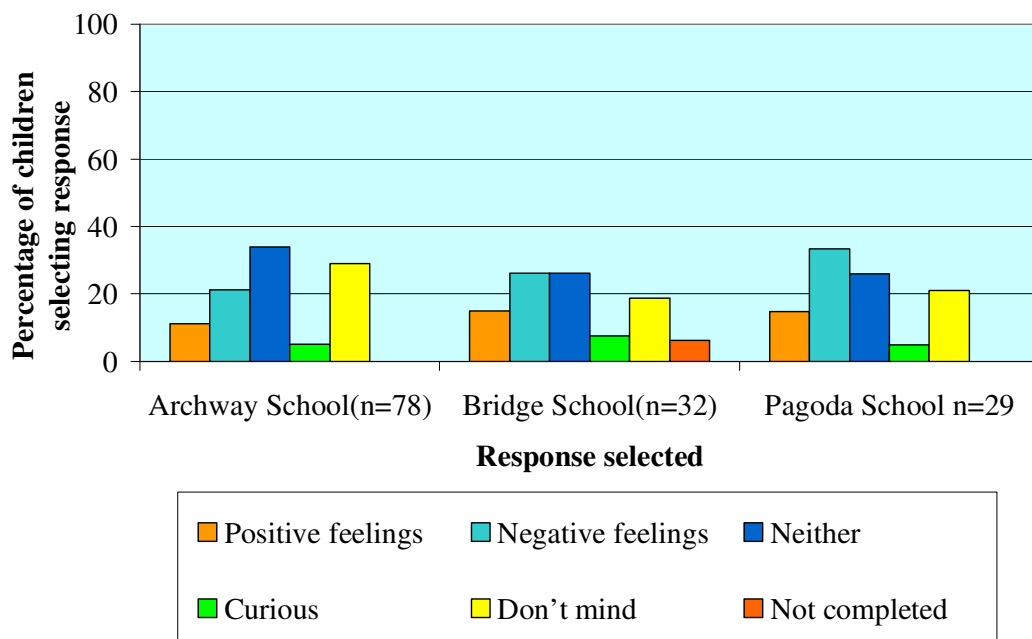


FIGURE 4.14 ‘How do you feel about not being involved?’

The next question was multiple-choice and asked the children to select from five options how they thought members of the research group should be selected. Of the options available (see Figure 4.15), ‘picking names out of a hat’ was the most popular choice with over 50 percent of children at Archway and 69 percent of children at Pagoda selecting this option. It was also the most popular option at Bridge (44 percent) although here, 38 percent of children felt that teachers should make the selection. However, although fewer than 10 percent of children responded ‘Other’ when they were asked for their own ideas, some felt that picking names out of a hat should be preceded by volunteering (see also Table 4.10) as they felt that, in this way, only the children who were interested would be selected.

At both Archway and Bridge, the second most popular option was for the teachers to select the group. 12 percent of children opted for selection by ability in mathematics or English although, as Table 4.10 shows, when invited to give their own ideas, other particular abilities, talents and attitudes were identified as possible criteria. It seems surprising that so many of the children should be in favour of teachers making the selection when, in response to previous questions, they expressed such clear opinions about the need for fairness and equality of opportunity. A possible explanation here might be that the children would be happy for teachers to do this if the criteria for selection were made known and the selection process was transparent. Alternatively, it could be the case that, based on prior experience in other areas, children have faith that their teachers know which children are best suited to particular activities. It is not clear from the current questionnaire which of these interpretations is likely to be the most probable.

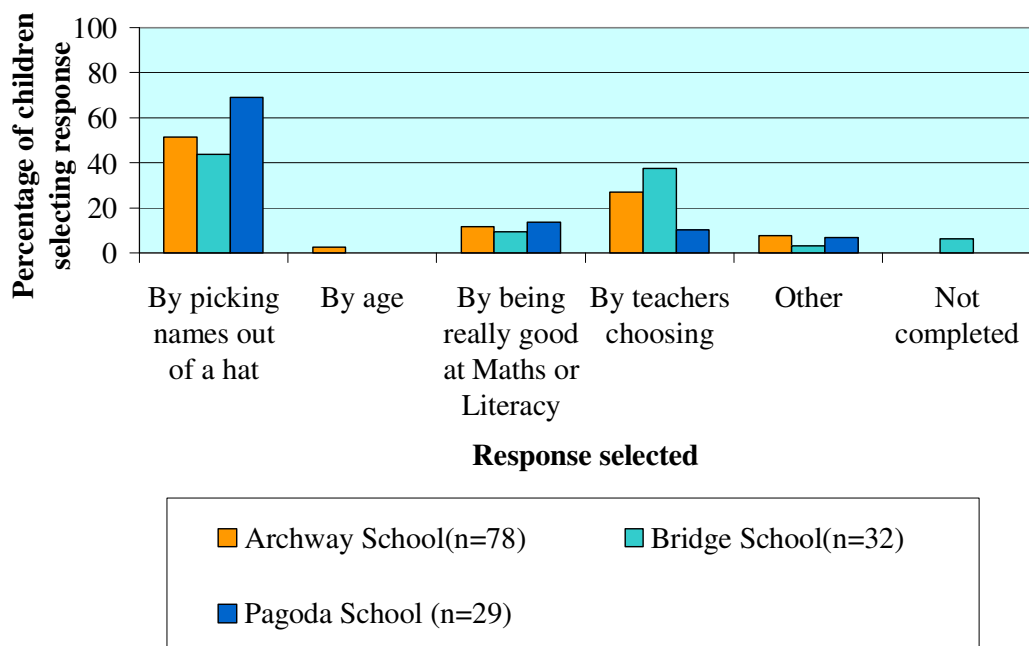


FIGURE 4.15 ‘If it is only possible to teach research skills in small groups, how do you think those few children should be chosen?’

The final questionnaire item asked for the children’s opinions about whether they thought it was important to be allowed to carry out research projects on aspects of their lives that

Categories of children's own statements	Ranking (1=most frequently cited reason)		
	Archway n=19	Bridge n=2	Pagoda n=3
Volunteering <i>By signing something saying they want to.</i> <i>You volunteer yourself then pick it out of a hat.</i>	1	1=	2
Ability in particular areas <i>By picking smart children who are talented in a certain way so they can carry on there specialties into things there good at.</i> <i>By having a sort of gift at the right thing they are chosen to do.</i>	2=	-	-
Attitude <i>By who has the right attitude to the matter.</i> <i>By picking the people who would take it seriously.</i>	2=	-	-
Different groups at different times <i>Throughout the year anybody who wants to can take part.</i> <i>I think everyone should have a chans to do the research so I think you should do groups of people on each day.</i>	3	-	-
Tests <i>By tests and interviewing.</i> <i>Give them a sheet and the people with the highest scores get to be in the reacher group.</i>	4=	-	1
Voting <i>A vote.</i>	-	-	-
Nomination <i>By children nominating people that have worked hard all year.</i>	4=	-	-
Mixed abilities <i>Mixed abilities.</i>	4=	-	-
Don't know	-	1=	-

(- indicates no responses in this category)

TABLE 4.10 'If it is only possible to teach research skills in small groups, how do you think those few children should be chosen?' (Where none of the given responses is selected)

they choose for themselves. In all three schools, between 70 and 90 percent of children were in favour of this (Figure 4.16) although 20 percent of children at Pagoda answered 'no' to this question. When the children who had answered 'yes' were asked to elaborate, freedom of choice of topic ranked as the first and second most important factor at Bridge and Archway respectively, although it only ranked 5 at Pagoda (see Table 4.11). Here, the high ranking given instead to research process as a learning experience (2) and the value this might have in the children's futures (1) suggest that the children may have been told

this, especially as the CaR initiative was announced during a school assembly. At Archway and Bridge, too, such research was perceived to lead to positive outcomes in terms of learning experiences. Across all the schools, the motivational aspects of freedom of choice ranked either first or second in importance and the rankings show that such research was also perceived to have a positive impact not only in terms of raising awareness of children's lives but also in widening the children's own perspectives.

The number of children who gave a reason why children should not engage with independent research was very small (Table 4.12). Nevertheless, their reasons are interesting, particularly the view that research is an adult activity, since the interview data show that, for some young researchers, this was a motivating factor.

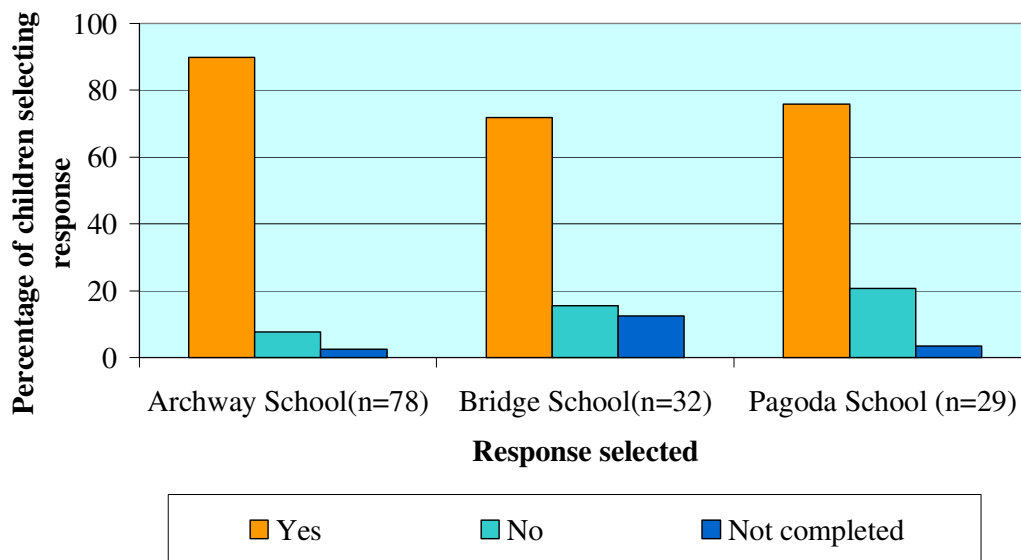


FIGURE 4.16 'Do you think it is important for children to be able to carry out their own research projects on aspects of their lives that they choose?'

	Ranking (1=most frequently cited reason)		
Categories of children's own statements	Archway n=61	Bridge n=18	Pagoda n=21
Motivational factors <i>So they will be interested and try.</i> <i>People find it fun if it is something of their choice.</i>	1	2=	2=
Freedom to choose <i>They should be able to choose.</i> <i>Because they should have the freedom of what they want to do.</i>	2	1	5
Valuable learning experience <i>It gives them an idea of what a researcher does.</i> <i>Because you can learn more stuff. It will help your brain.</i>	3=	2=	2=
Positive impact on others <i>Because it means you have a useful insight into children's lives.</i> <i>People will learn from this.</i>	3=	3	3
To generate new knowledge/ideas <i>Because it widens the view of the world and helps you get a different perspective.</i> <i>Because it can help people to have there own ideas.</i>	4	2=	4
Future value <i>Because it may change their future careers.</i> <i>To prepare for times when you have to do research exaple in university.</i>	6	2=	1
Independence/Developing own ideas <i>Make up your own design.</i> <i>Yes because you need to get independent.</i>	5	-	-

(- indicates no responses in this category)

TABLE 4.11 Why? (when response to 'Do you think it is important for children to be able to carry out their own research projects on aspects of their lives that they choose?' is Yes)

	Ranking (1=most frequently cited reason)		
Category	Archway n=4	Bridge n=3	Pagoda n=6
Something for the future <i>Because we're only children.</i> <i>Because adults are older and smarter than little kids and big kids like us.</i>	2=	1=	1
Need for support <i>Because you shouldn't be left on your own when you don't feel like it.</i>	2=	-	-
Not necessary <i>Because it isn't that important.</i> <i>Because people might not find that aspect interesting.</i>	1	-	-
Difficulty <i>Because it could be hard to.</i>	-	-	2=
Lack of interest <i>Because it will be boring.</i> <i>Some people don't know what they want to do when they're older.</i>	-	1=	2=
Need for choice <i>I think if they want to do it then that's their choice.</i>	-	1=	
Don't know	-	-	-

(- indicates no responses in this category)

TABLE 4.12 Why? (when response to 'Do you think it is important for children to be able to carry out their own research projects on aspects of their lives that they choose?' is No)

4.4.2 Summary of findings from Child Questionnaire 1

The main findings from Child Questionnaire 1 are summarised in Table 4.13. The young researchers' peers at Archway, Bridge and Pagoda perceived the young researchers' engagement in research process to have afforded these children the following positive and negative experiences and outcomes:

Positive experiences and outcomes	Negative experiences and outcomes
Enjoyment	Increased workload
The opportunity to take part in an activity that was different to those experienced in the children's day to day schooling	The shortage of time available
Increased curriculum skills	
The development of research knowledge and skills	
Skills and knowledge which would have future value	
Increased topic knowledge	
Increased awareness of others' opinions	

TABLE 4.13 Summary of findings from Child Questionnaire 1 (Archway, Bridge and Pagoda)

The responses given to the items in Child Questionnaire 1 can thus be seen largely to corroborate data from the participatory activities. The potential impact of children's research to provide insights into children's lives was felt by the young researchers' peers as positive and many appeared to appreciate the opportunity to be involved in the children's projects in some way. However, other concerns raised by them included the need

- for children to have a choice about membership of the research groups
- for the selection of young researchers to be 'fair'
- for children of all abilities to be eligible for membership of the research groups
- for children to have a choice about participating in other children's research
- for young researchers to choose their own research topics.

4.4.3 Child Questionnaire 2 (Archway and Rotunda schools)

A further questionnaire (ChQ2, Appendix C) was distributed to young researchers at both Archway (Cohort 2) and Rotunda. These children's responses were coded thematically. Categories emerging from this data and illustrative responses for each school are shown in Tables 4.14 - 4.17 and the findings summarised in Section 4.4.4. Although the number of children completing this questionnaire was relatively small, it is clear that the categories which emerged from this data largely concur with those which emerged from the participatory activity and ChQ1 data.

Nevertheless, some interesting differences are revealed between the two schools and are likely to be due to the young researchers' very different experiences. For example, as shown in Table 4.14, when the children were asked about the most important things about becoming a young researcher, only the children at Rotunda mentioned ethical considerations. As a further example, the children at Rotunda clearly felt it important that adults should listen and learn from their research findings, while at Archway, having a say or being listened to were not mentioned. Possible reasons for these differences became clear during analysis of the interview data and are discussed in Section 4.5.

Archway (n=5)	Rotunda (n=19)
Enjoying the process <i>I think it is really important because it teaches kids a lot of skills and is really enjoyable.</i> <i>And most of all I had fun.</i>	Enjoying the process <i>Because it is fun being a researcher.</i> <i>Enjoying it.</i>
	Thinking about ethics <i>To think about ethics.</i> <i>Being ethical.</i>
Increased knowledge <i>Because you can learn a lot on a particular subject.</i> <i>I found out things I didn't know.</i>	Increased knowledge <i>So they can find out new things.</i> <i>So we can find out new information.</i> <i>I found out a lot about what people think about my topic.</i>
Developing curriculum skills <i>...learn how to design a good powerpoint.</i> <i>I learned how to touch type.</i>	Developing curriculum skills <i>Because it helps with some school work.</i> <i>Being able to do maths.</i> <i>ICT, my ICT work.</i>
Increased self-esteem <i>I feel quite proud of myself for being able to do the project. I feel confident about public speaking.</i> <i>When I did complete it I felt even better about myself as it was a challenge.</i>	Increased self-esteem <i>Being brave.</i>
Developing research skills <i>Because it is an important field to know and will help a lot when we grow up.</i> <i>I learned lots about questionnaires and observations.</i>	Developing research skills <i>Being ethical, putting the things together, getting the results.</i> <i>To be systematic and get my answers.</i> <i>Sorting stuff.</i>
Having a say	Having a say <i>I think it is important for adults to listen to what children have to say and learn from them.</i> <i>Because people can understand.</i>
Independent working <i>I feel like I did a lot of work and I can now cope under a lot of pressure.</i> <i>Research has taught me to make my work clear and easy to understand.</i>	Independent working <i>So children can work independently.</i> <i>Persevere in the end.</i>
Motivation <i>I think it is better if just a few children are researchers as otherwise you wouldn't feel like the research was very important as you weren't specifically picked for it.</i>	

TABLE 4.14 Responses relating to the most important things about becoming a young researcher in a primary school

A further question focused on the problems the children had encountered during the research process. Lack of time was a significant issue in both schools but for different reasons (Table 4.15). At Archway, this was exacerbated by increased workload and missing lessons. At Rotunda, where research process was built into the curriculum, time

pressures related instead to the time consuming nature of data collection and analysis.

While some children at Rotunda had experienced difficulties working with a partner, it

Archway (n=5)	Rotunda (n=19)
Lack of time <i>A waste of my time and stress.</i> <i>I didn't really but a few times I found it hard to complete the homework.</i> <i>I found it hard to hand in my research and revise for my SATs.</i>	Lack of time <i>We didn't get enough time or resources.</i> <i>Sorting out the questionnaires into piles and going round the classes asking people to fill out the questionnaires because it takes very very long!</i>
Timetabling arrangements <i>Because you have to miss lots of ordinary lessons.</i>	
Access to external participants <i>If it was possible I would try to interview more influential people in the community.</i>	
Motivation <i>My main problem was halfway through I lost faith in myself but I managed to get back to it.</i>	
Data collection <i>Sometimes people did not understand the questions on the questionnaire and wrote incorrect answers.</i> <i>I would use another school because I think I would get more genuine answers.</i>	
	Disagreements with partners <i>Having to work in twos</i> <i>Working in twos because you want to do something and the other person does not.</i>
	Problems with research instruments <i>Getting the younger children to understand the questions.</i> <i>The little kids did not understand my questions.</i> <i>Some younger children didn't understand questionnaires.</i> <i>I found some people choose to be silly in questionnaires.</i>

TABLE 4.15 Responses to questions about problems encountered during the research process

should be noted that they had been given a choice about working in pairs or alone. The children at Archway had had to work alone. Although the data presented here suggests that only the children at Rotunda experienced problems with their research instruments, this was not the case and is discussed below in relation to the data presented in Table 4.17.

The children were then asked for their opinions on whole class versus small group researcher initiatives in primary schools. The differences between the responses from the children at the two schools are marked and again appear to reflect their different experiences. The children at Rotunda appeared to appreciate the fact that everyone in their class had had the opportunity to experience research process. In contrast, those at Archway appeared to consider being part of a small selected group was associated with high status being afforded to research process and that the work involved might be difficult for some children.

Archway (n=4)	Rotunda (n=12)
<i>I think it's better if just a few children are researchers as otherwise you wouldn't feel like the research was very important as you weren't specially picked for it. Also, some of the kids might crack under the pressure and the all the work put into their project would be wasted.</i>	<i>Great because we get to find out a lot of new things (1 other similar response).</i>
<i>I feel that only the people who want to should.</i>	<i>That everyone gets a chance (5 other similar responses)</i>
<i>I think only a few should learn because it takes a lot of effort and it's very hard for teachers.</i>	<i>I think every one should get ago because you will properly only get one chance (2 other similar responses)</i>
<i>I think that a whole class may be tricky to handle but 5 or 6 is not enough.</i>	<i>I think it depends on the children but everyone should have a chance.</i>

TABLE 4.16 Responses to being asked how the young researchers felt about small group versus whole class initiatives

Finally, the questionnaire asked the children what they would change if they had the chance to do their research again. Responses to this revealed further difficulties that were not disclosed by the children at Archway when they were asked to identify any problems they had encountered. Like the children at Rotunda, they had experienced problems with their data collection and it is notable that these appear to implicate power relationships and the difficulties of interpretation within child-child research.

Archway (n=3)	Rotunda (n=17)
<i>I would use another school because I think I would get more genuine answers.</i>	<i>I will do a more interesting topic (3 other similar responses)</i>
<i>I would do my research the day I was set it and make observation notes clearer.</i>	<i>I would dig more deeply into my topic.</i>
<i>If it was possible I would try to interview more influential people in the community.</i>	<i>Explain questions or maybe not give questions to infants[i.e., ages 5-7 years] (2 other similar responses)</i>
	<i>How many people I asked to questionnaire I asked 34 people and it takes ages.</i>
	<i>Nothing (8 responses indicating no changes would be made)</i>

TABLE 4.17 What the children would change if they did their research again

4.4.4 Summary of findings from Child Questionnaire 2

The main findings from Child Questionnaire 2 are summarised in Table 4.18. This shows the positive and negative aspects and outcomes of their experiences reported by the young researchers at Archway and Rotunda. The importance of children becoming young researchers only if they choose to was also mentioned.

Positive experiences and outcomes	Negative experiences and outcomes
Enjoyment	Timetabling arrangements
Having a say and being listened to	Insufficient time in which to complete projects
Working independently of adults	The pressures of externally imposed testing
Developing skills and knowledge relating to research process	Increased workload
Increased curriculum skills	Problems with research instruments
Increased topic knowledge	Access to participants and potential participants external to the school
Increased confidence	Relationships with working partners.
Increased awareness of ethics	Insufficient resources
Increased perseverance.	

TABLE 4.18 Summary of findings from Child Questionnaire 2 (Archway and Rotunda)

It is clear that the findings from the questionnaires and the participative activities complement each other, confirming the significance of the issues denoted by each category to the children across all five schools in the study.

4.4.5 Developing the model

The findings emerging from analysis of the questionnaire data suggest that the earlier model of the factors and processes impacting on children as researchers in these five primary schools (Figure 4.8, page 176) can now be modified. A revised model is shown in Figure 4.17. The amendments and augmentations which have been made take into account the findings summarised in Table 4.13 (page 194) and Table 4.18 (page 199), revealing those issues which have been newly identified or corroborated by the children as significant.

The accompanying legend explains how these have been integrated. The display of factors and processes which were identified by analysis of the participatory activities data but which have not been identified during analysis of the questionnaire data (*ways of working, purpose, adult facilitation, training, external facilitators and dissemination*) remains unchanged. Those identified through analysis of the questionnaire data only (*motivation, topic knowledge, perseverance and external participants*) have been added and are shown in orange. Those which have been identified through analysis of both the participatory activities data and the questionnaire data (*choice, selection, topic, peer relations, information, self-esteem, independence, access, research skills/knowledge, curriculum skills, time and externally imposed testing*) are now shown in emboldened text.

Relationships between the central themes are now shown by dashed lines where these have been confirmed by analysis of the questionnaire data. Otherwise, they remain as broken lines. Arrowheads have been added where analysis of the questionnaire data suggests that the relationships between central themes are two- rather than one-way.

Further amendments and augmentation of the model presented in Figure 4.17 will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, these being informed by the analysis of the interview data in addition to analysis of the data discussed previously.

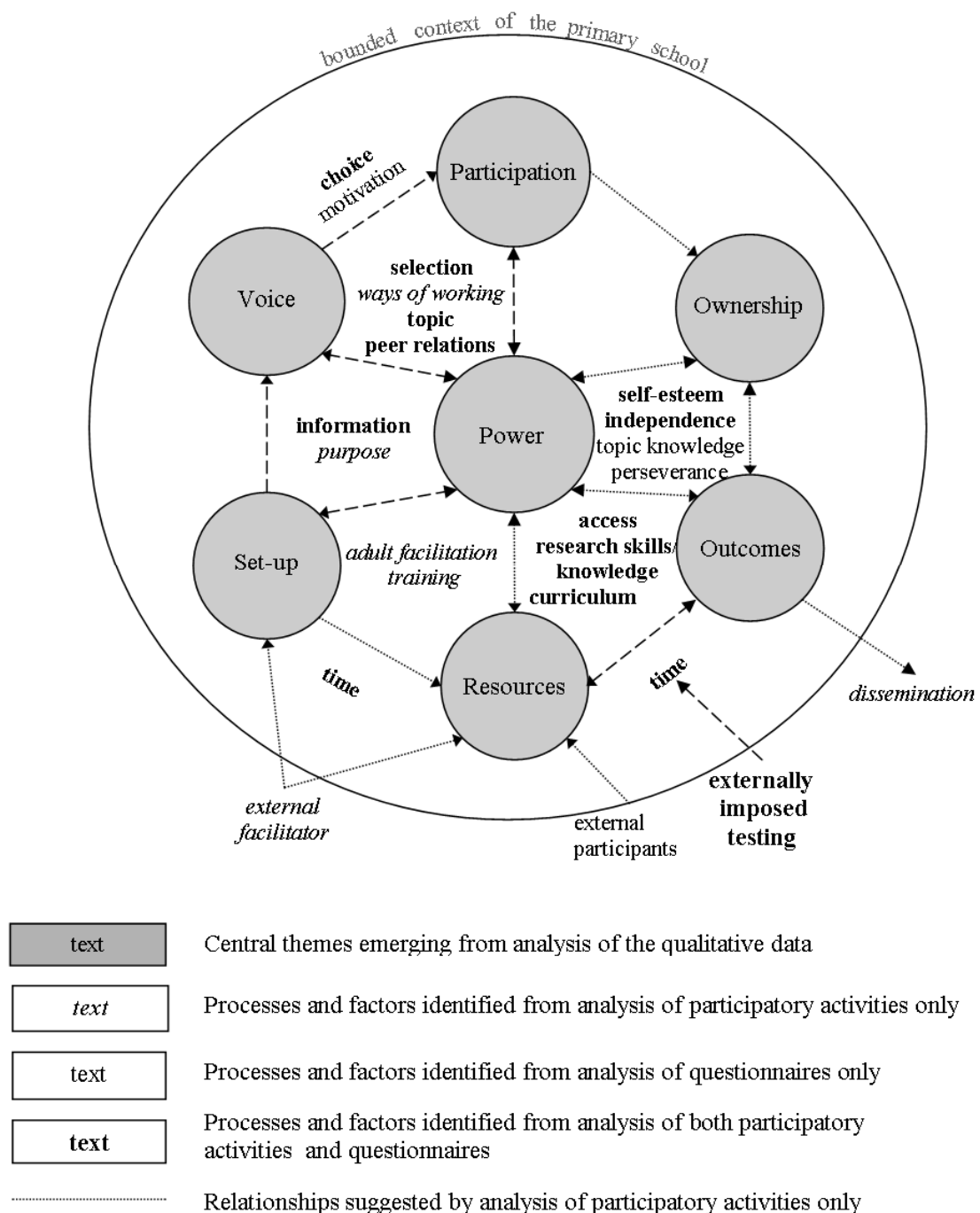


FIGURE 4.17 A revised model emerging from the participatory activity and questionnaire data: factors and processes which impact on children as researchers in English primary schools

4.5 Analysis and discussion of the data from the interviews

In this section, data from interviews with adults and the discussion elements of the focus groups held with the children are presented under main headings which respect the children's own identification of issues they considered to have been important during their research experiences. Thus, the eleven headings under which the data are organised draw directly on the children's Diamond Ranking activity statements, namely:

- Having a choice about being in the research group
- Being happy and comfortable with the research I am doing
- Knowing what I am doing the research for
- Being able to work individually
- Being able to work in a group and share ideas
- Being able to work with people from outside school
- Being able to get help from my friend or teacher when I need it
- Getting enough time to do the work
- Learning different skills and interesting things
- Becoming more confident and not feeling shy
- Being able to tell teachers, adults and children what I have found out.

4.5.1 Having a choice about being in the research group

Having a choice about being a member of the research group was discussed at length during the interviews in each school. Different issues were raised by children who had or had not been given a choice as to whether or not they wanted to participate in a young researchers' group. In the main, these centred on fairness, availability of information, decision making, and conflicting priorities and it was clear that, in some cases, children's feelings about processes of selection and choice were poorly understood by their teachers. For example, in schools where the children had not been given this choice, they were more

likely to identify fairness and equality of opportunity as issues. Many children felt strongly about this:

- [...] you should put everybody's name in a hat and they should take people out who don't want to do it and they should take out like people who have been picked for a lot of things [...].

(And so were the people who were chosen the people who tend to get chosen to do things?)

- Yes

- It feels like you never get a chance to do anything, you feel really left out and stuff. (Peers, Archway)

This was a point of view that met with some sympathy from teachers at Archway and Tower:

I find it very hard because you almost feel like you're not providing equal opportunities for everybody. I just explained there would be chances for different people to do different things. (L, Class teacher, Archway)

I think they needed to feel that it wasn't some sort of secret society, that it wasn't only, you know, those children being chosen because they were this and the other [...]. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

However, it seems that explaining decisions to the children was not always a priority:

So, yeah, their perception of it will be, well, it will be [the more able children] again. Well, it's because they're the kids on the register and they have an entitlement. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

It seems reasonable to suppose that children are not likely to be able to see beyond issues of fairness when they do not have any other information which might help them to make a more grounded judgement.

Furthermore, where the school's reason for taking up the initiative was based on provision for their more able pupils, as was the case at Archway, it did not seem to be important to provide any information to the children before selection took place:

I was just in a random maths lesson and someone shouted out, "People for research group!". And then someone came in and said,

“That’s you.” And I was like, “Uhh? I don’t even know what you are talking about.” And they just took me in. (YR, Archway)

For the young researchers, lack of information extended beyond not knowing initially that they had been selected as a member of a group to not knowing what was involved and what was expected of them:

*- If they were going to give you a choice, they might have told you what you were going to do.
- I didn’t actually know we were going to do our own projects.
- ‘Cause I thought it was just going to be about how you do research
(YRs, Archway)*

Nevertheless, some children were accepting of this and appreciated the reasons for their being selected when these were explained to them afterwards:

We’d been picked because we were interested in things, exploring things, yeah and at the end [headteacher] mentioned MAT [More Able and Talented] and I asked [...] what it meant and she said we were very talented so I felt very chuffed. (YR, Archway)

However, for others, being identified as a member of a more able group was not necessarily a positive experience:

*- We were told “We chose you because you’re curious,” but all the other people, the other four, are just plain brainy. [...]
- No offence to them they know so much. I like to know stuff, interesting facts, but we felt like we didn’t really belong.
(YRs, Archway, Paired interview)*

Such negative feelings were associated not only with feelings of not belonging but also with the reactions of their peers:

*People watch you and people think you’re really geeky: “Ha, ha, you’re in the research club”. Children call it ‘the geek club’.
(YR, Archway, Paired interview notes)*

As there is a relationship between peer acceptance and children’s willingness to participate in classroom activities more generally (for a review, see Ladd, Bubs and Troop, 2004), being presented as a ‘geek’ or a ‘nerd’ by their peers appears to offer a strong disincentive that could explain why children might not want to belong to the research group:

[...] you might feel like you didn't really want to do it 'cause people might think you were like, a bit like, a nerd, like you were turning into a nerd. So if you picked it like randomly and you made sure you didn't have all the clever people in it, then I think people might want to do it. (Peer, Archway)

The two girls at Archway who took part in the paired interview dropped out of the research club after the training element of the project was complete. Their decision to do so reached beyond the lack of choice about belonging to the group. In their school, provision for the more able was seen as the priority; empowering the children through allowing them to make decisions was not. This was evident from a comment one of them made:

*Even on School Council [headteacher] says you should consult children and she does and I think that's good but we've missed lots of School Council because [headteacher] is too busy. She should have known or said, "Seeing this is a priority ..." but she just brushes it away. "I've got too much to do, I've got more important things to do." [...] There's no point being on it if she's not going to take on board what you're saying.
(YR, Archway, Paired interview notes)*

Indeed, when these girls did make a decision of their own – one they found difficult - it was badly received:

*- We were given evil looks
- They should at least have said, "Well done, you've done something about it." We were only criticised for doing something.
(YRs, Archway, Paired interview notes)*

These problems did, at least, lead to some acknowledgement on the part of teachers and facilitators that using ability as a criterion for choosing children for this project may not have been the best one:

One mother [...] said, "They are trying to do too much for him. [...] He can't do anything properly because there are too many things being provided because he is able". (P, Facilitator, Independent, Archway)

Obviously the danger is that you limit it to six and then you are looking at your top six as it were but those top six may not be the

ones that would benefit most from it, you know. [...]. (N, Class teacher, Archway)

This point of view was supported by comments made by the facilitator working with the young researchers at Pagoda and by the children's peers:

What they did was give a real opportunity to children that needed it. Their gifted and talented would undoubtedly have benefitted from it too but I felt that the ones that did it benefitted much more [...] because they had further to go and they went further. (D, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

- I think people who aren't as good [should be chosen] because they could learn a bit so like they could catch up a bit

- [...] they should choose the people that are a bit less than average so they could be over average. (Peers, Pagoda)

Lack of information about how children had been selected and about what was involved in the project continued to be problematic at Archway during the following year, when the school took on the running of the project for themselves:

I don't think it was something we made clear to them this year. [...] we had one of them that dropped out [...] I don't think they really understand what is expected of them. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

This is not surprising since prior information seemed to have been confined to the structure of the programme rather than its content:

*We reminded them of previous presentations of the previous year and then said you are going to be doing this research.
(So they weren't quite sure what was going to be expected?)
We did just say to them we are going to teach you six lessons and then you are going to be with different people, different tutors.
(V, Teacher/facilitator, Archway)*

In contrast, at Bridge, where the project was not viewed as a 'gifted and talented' initiative, the children were offered a choice about membership of the research group:

*- We were having a maths lesson and um [K, facilitator, CRC] came in and [teacher] explained what was going on, the stuff we would be doing.
- Oh and [...] she gave him like a sheet, a folder, with lots of information about it.*

- And some examples of other children that had done some research, um, so we could see what it was like and then we had, we could go in and say if we wanted to do it or not and [teacher] would write our names down and then he would pick six children, 3 boys and 3 girls. (YRs, Bridge)

Although the teacher made the final decision, the reasons for this were discussed with the children:

*(Do you know how he chose those six?)
Yes, he said it was people who, um, he thought would most benefit from doing something like this, would most, like, enjoy it. (YR, Bridge)*

This, together with being offered a choice, appeared to make the children more accepting of the decision that was made:

*- I did sign up but I didn't get in but I did have a choice.
- It was alright 'cause it's, like, you don't get everything in life and [...] some of my friends were doing it so I got to know what they were doing and it was like I was part of it but not part of it, do you know what I mean? (Peers, Bridge)*

Where opportunities for discussion were offered, these were seen by the teachers as crucial to allowing those not taking part to feel involved in the research process.

[The young researchers] would come back and discuss what they had done with the others [...] so the others were actually very much involved in it. [...] they were desperate to do their own work but they were eager to help support the children that were actually taking part in the research. [...] At the end of the research, because they did it to the rest of the class, the rest of them had tiny little snippets of what was going on and they had the full works at the end of it [...]. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

The children recognised that choice was a crucial element of the process of selection and had a significant impact on their motivation to undertake the work:

*(How important is it to have a choice about whether you actually take part or not?)
Very, because if you get pushed into something, then you won't give it your best or you won't enjoy it and there is no point in doing it. (Peer, Bridge)*

At Pagoda, although the children were not given a choice about their membership, the reasons for this were very different from those at Archway. As at Bridge, the Pagoda young researchers group was not seen as a ‘gifted and talented’ initiative. Rather, the emphasis was on pupil voice. Despite this emphasis, the school was given only a few days to select the group and the choice was made by the class teachers. However, the following comments from teachers at Pagoda illustrate and confirm the importance this school placed on listening to its pupils and on identifying ways children could be involved in the projects without necessarily being members of the research group:

If we did it again I think we'd ask them to [self nominate] but we'd have to spend far more time letting them know exactly what's required.

(L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

I think if you want the whole school population to be involved then I think the children should pick the group because then they've been a part of the process since the word go, not just been dragged in to do the interviews and questionnaires [...] because then they would have been involved [...]. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

Like the teacher at Tower who considered it essential to ‘involve’ the whole class through discussion about what the young researchers were doing, here, ways of involving other children were identified as important. This example shows that small group CaR initiatives do not need to be exclusive if sensitively managed by schools. Nevertheless, even when this is the case, the process can sometimes be hampered by externally imposed constraints. At Pagoda, for example, there was little information sharing with the children but this was because the school had not been provided with the relevant details by the external organisation who initiated the project:

(How much did they know about what they were going to get involved in before they went to the first session?)

As much as we knew. Which was we were going out to [city] to learn about research.

(So it wasn't that you hadn't told them?)

No, we didn't know. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

At Rotunda, where a whole class of children was involved in the initiative, the emphasis was on including and listening to children from the outset - perhaps more so than at any other school in this study:

[The children's teacher] said, "Why is there elitism, which is just pulling out the right kids and giving them something exciting to do? I want all my kids to have this, this is very good stuff, all kids should be doing research. Even special needs children should have a go. There is an elitism when you're talking about children as researchers that's stopping it. There is an elitism about research isn't there?" (E, Facilitator, Independent, Rotunda)

On the one hand, the teacher's arguments here echoed the feelings expressed in the examples given earlier: that research group membership should not be confined to those of high ability. On the other hand, it could reasonably be claimed that where a whole class of children becomes involved as young researchers, none of the children have a choice about their involvement:

[...] to be honest I don't think the whole class would want to do it. And if they didn't want to do it, it wouldn't work. They have got to be motivated, the individual child has got to be motivated because, otherwise, [...], if the child isn't motivated and all the motivation is persuasion and, you know, producing carrots and things, I mean that is not achieving anything [...]. (P, Facilitator, Independent, Archway)

However, none of the child participants from Rotunda expressed disquiet about the lack of choice regarding their involvement, although, as data generated through participatory activities shows, it does seem that not all of them were wholeheartedly involved. In contrast, the (whole class) cohort of children at Tower was apparently very keen to be involved. They worked with their class teacher as facilitator; the previous year, just a small group had worked with an external facilitator. Their teacher was asked if this change in arrangements seemed to matter to the children:

No, it was just the opportunity to do it. To do something they were interested in. That they had control over, I think that was their real driving force. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

4.5.1.1 Summary

The data presented in this section reinforces the findings from the participatory activity and questionnaire data that offering children a choice about whether or not they become members of research groups in schools was a key factor influencing their perceptions concerning CaR initiatives. Wanting to be involved was seen as motivational and lack of choice as disempowering. Two important messages for schools that might want to engage with CaR initiatives have emerged from this aspect of the interview analysis: firstly, simply offering children choice is not sufficient. Choices need to be informed. Secondly, in those cases where the initiative was seen to provide for the academic needs of more able children, schools need to consider that other children might perceive this as implying that lack of ability presents a barrier to membership.

4.5.2 Being happy and comfortable with the research I am doing

Next, the analysis of the interview data revealed that choice of topic appeared to be critical in engaging the pupils in their projects, even more so than choice regarding membership of the research groups, as the following interview extracts show:

[...]it was really nice because I felt I could do my own important stuff. (YR, Archway)

For many children on a personal level they gained so much because they chose their own topic (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

I think that is one of the key motivational points, that they get to choose. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

Even when the children's choice of research topic was restricted to within a given theme, as at Bridge and Pagoda where the projects were initiated by external organisations, the children valued the choice they were given and identified this as key to their engagement:

(You had to do something about literacy?)
- Yes but we were able to choose our topics.
- Well, it wouldn't have been as enjoyable and it wouldn't have been as good an experience [...] 'cause if we are researching something that we want to know about, we are more enthusiastic and more

likely to take it seriously and if we are not then it's just, like, what's the point?

(YRs, Bridge)

Additionally, although these schools agreed to take part in the projects because they were interested in pursuing the particular themes which were identified, they were happy to let the children take control:

So they had their topic given to them but how they kind of used that was up to them. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

One of the successes I think of the group working here, we didn't say to them that we had any expectations, the school expects this answer, it was completely up to you what you wanted to find out and we would respect that. (L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

Choice of topic appeared to be motivational, not just because the children could follow their own interests but because having a choice was not something they normally experienced in school:

- Well, you don't have like writing books and things, the teacher pointing to someone and saying, "Tell me the answer!". Because you don't really answer, you have to find out the answer for yourself and that like takes ages.

- In real lessons, the teacher decided what you do. Here we could decide on our own research project, decide how we wanted to do it. We could.

(YRs, Archway)

However, in the case of classwork topics, some teachers indicated that choice was not something deliberately withheld from the children but, instead, lack of choice was attributed to the pressures of the National Curriculum:

Hmm, National Curriculum thinking. [...] We've lost sight a little bit of getting the children to think a bit more [...]. I always feel there are opportunities where the children have expressed an interest in something but you just don't have the time to say, "Hold on, let's put the brakes on and just let you work with this." [...] I just don't think we have the opportunities to do that or perhaps we've just lost the courage to do it.

(N, Class teacher, Archway)

Particularly in Year 6, we are pushing, pushing, you know, “You’ve got to learn this, you have to do this, you have to revise that,” and that is very prescribed. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

Nevertheless, while some children found the novelty of having the freedom to choose a work topic liberating, others found it problematic:

And you know it’s a difficult thing to get hold of because you have someone saying to them, “Well, you have a choice,” and then they go [...], “This is not what we usually do in class. [...] So we are saying over and over again, “I don’t want to know what you think I want to hear. I want to know what you want to do.” (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

As this issue was identified only at the two schools where whole classes worked on their own research, it is likely that other factors played their part here. With the wide range of abilities represented in whole class contexts, the funnelling process necessary to come up with a research question could be challenging:

What they found difficult was understanding what they were going to research. [...] We did lots of brain showering and [...] a lot more discussion [...] so I think they’d had more time to think things through and formulate their ideas. Did anyone have a difficulty? Not really a difficulty picking what they wanted to do, it was more, “Well, I want to do football” then the problem was “Well, what is it about football?” (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

It is also, perhaps, to be expected that the level of support needed to assist the children in this crucial early stage of the research process cannot be provided easily where one or two adults are working with a whole class rather than with a small group.

Nevertheless, responses to the children’s choices seemed to reflect the schools’ reasons for taking up the initiative. At Rotunda and Tower, especially, personal motivations and control were seen as paramount. As a result, the children’s choices were respected by teachers and facilitators:

I think some of them weren’t as, you know, what I suppose you considered deep and meaningful [...] [but] we were, like, yes, fine, if that’s what you want to do, that’s what you will do [...], those choices valued for whatever they are [...] and the research looked at

and valued for what it is. [...] I think they need to choose and realise that this is them, this is their choices, their empowerment. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

I said, "What are you going to do, Sanji?" and he said, "Murder, why do people murder?" and it's a beautiful illustration of, I think, of the adult frame of mind in my head playing teacher and not listening to him because I merely thought he's gone for something, you know, catchy and he's doing his male bit, you know, he wants to do something gruesome. [...] I got talking to him about loss and death and stuff like that and he didn't seem very impressed with what I was saying. [...] I asked him, "Why?" "Oh well, when I lived in [town] my uncle was murdered. I don't understand that." So it's a perfect piece of research for him to do. There are times when you really need to shut up and stop trying to reframe what the kids are saying. (E, Facilitator, Independent, Rotunda)

In contrast, at Archway, allowing the young researchers a free choice of topic was seen as potentially problematic by some teachers:

I think [headteacher] was very keen to kind of OK the topics [...]. If things aren't maybe really um, acceptable or, um, they ... sometimes the children's agenda is different to [headteacher's] agenda and by [headteacher's] agenda I mean the school's agenda, do you know what I mean? [...] You know if you are doing something like this you have to be aware that some kinds of research some people won't like and you know, it might not be kind of um, it might not be, um, like relevant or applicable. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

This viewpoint clearly speaks to the issue of control and the school prioritising what was relevant or acceptable to the school over what was relevant and important to the children. It indicates that children here could carry out research as long as it did not upset the *status quo*. This was also acknowledged as potentially problematic at Pagoda, perhaps because the children there were investigating an issue which was directly related to teaching and learning:

I think it can be, if it is done the wrong way, quite threatening to teachers, that is the school. If suddenly you are saying we want children to have more of a say, more of an opinion about their own learning because they can [...] see it as critical of their job. (H, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

Nevertheless, this was not seen as only a problem for teachers:

I think [children] are often scared to enter into that territory, to even think that they can make suggestions on teaching and learning [...] because there is often very little student choice, they don't even realise that it's negotiable. (H, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

At Pagoda, however, the children's research topics did not cause any difficulties, perhaps not only because of a strong 'pupil voice' ethic but also because the school accepted freedom of choice as 'part and parcel' of the offered initiative.

In contrast, as mentioned above, for the two girls who withdrew from Cohort 1 at Archway, the choice of research topic was received badly. Motivated by their own experiences, the girls had decided to investigate different aspects of how having dogs as pets impacted on the lives of their peers:

Our teachers said, "Oh your topic sounds awful. You didn't choose a very interesting topic." (YR, Archway, Paired interview notes)

The girls that dropped out the year before they, their topics were you know kind of badly chosen. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

Their teachers' reactions and the subsequent direction by the school to choose a different topic was a major contributor to the girls' decision to withdraw:

You should choose and it ought to be interesting to us but you can't say because you get told off for being rude. (YR, Archway, Paired interview notes)

There was no motivation like, oh, I really want to finish this project, just, oh, I've got to. (YR, Archway, Paired interview notes)

As one of the girls' teachers later acknowledged,

We've created the game and now we are going to shift the goal posts a bit. (N, Class teacher, Archway)

4.5.2.1 Summary

These extracts strongly suggest that choice of topic is a crucial factor in engaging the children's interest in their research and in motivating them to carry out the work involved. It also suggests that making choices and decisions was sometimes difficult for children, as this was beyond their normal experience of school, where an externally imposed curriculum usually limits or even prohibits freedom of choice. In some cases, choice itself thus became a barrier to the children's engagement. For those schools in the sample that had a strong pupil voice ethic, topic choices and children's rights to express their opinions and be listened to were more likely to be respected and valued and the children empowered. In contrast, where academic provision was the reason for a school's engagement, choices were more likely to be judged as inappropriate and the child's own interests seen as less important than school priorities. Consequently, some young researchers experienced this lack of respect for their choices and the denial of their voice as disempowering. In one school, voice was only tolerated provided the topics chosen were not perceived as challenging the status quo. Here again, though, this seemed to depend on the ethos of the school and its reasons for taking up the young researchers initiative.

4.5.3 Knowing what I am doing the research for

Although it is apparent that perceived purposes for the children's research training and projects were varied, and that these differed between children and adults and between schools, it is clear that the purpose and expected outcomes of the children's research were clearly linked:

I think we need to be very clear on and very specific on what we want to find out and what we really want to gain from it really as a school. What do children want to gain and what do staff want to gain from the research, rather than doing it for the sake of doing it.
(C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

Where the research had a clear purpose that was made clear from the start (as at Bridge and Pagoda, where this had been identified by an external organisation) teachers felt this to be

helpful; not least because, as all the children worked within the same theme, discussion between them appears to have been instrumental in deepening their understanding of what they were doing.

There's got to be a purpose. Now, with six, you can work with them and you can talk with them and you can grow that purpose with them. [...]. You really have got to be specific about what the point of all this is, otherwise you are going to lose them from day one. (L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

I think they were keen to make a difference at a local level in terms of impact to their school or their teacher, [but] I think they wanted to explore for themselves [...]. Getting teachers to understand and also understand for themselves [...]. So in some ways they were motivated [...] by a desire for their own understanding but also wanting to kind of help. (K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)

Purpose, then, has potential impact on the school in terms of change and increased personal understanding of the topic being researched. In some cases, where children had identified topics of special significance to them, this was often sufficient:

Some of the children, like [name], for example, she had a definite purpose, didn't she? She knew why she was doing the research rather than just plucking an idea out of the air. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

Nevertheless, what is striking is the impact that having a purpose other than personal can have on the level of commitment shown by the children.

So they did feel it was a serious business, they weren't messing around, they really felt that they were, like, being hired to do a job, you know. (D, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

One thing that helped us through it was that it would help. (YR, Pagoda)

As the above quotation illustrates, at Pagoda, both teachers and children felt that the outcome of the research was important. This suggests that, given the difficulties associated with Year 6 children juggling research with the demands of the SATs, and the likelihood

that they will not be able to benefit from the change brought about as a result of the research findings, it perhaps makes sense for children younger than this to carry out the research, especially where topics are school related. If the school takes the children's findings seriously and is willing to effect necessary change, this would allow children to see the fruits of their labours. At Pagoda, where the young researchers were in Year 5, their teacher commented:

I think the children need to know it has purpose so they can see it implemented in their final year of school. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

Where the children had a free choice of research topic, purpose in terms of expected outcome seemed less easy to define. This, however, was also linked to an apparent lack of information for both children and adults:

To be honest I didn't really feel like that kind of informed about it or that kind of knowledgeable about it so I didn't have a very clear idea about what the expected outcomes was [...] and I think for some of the children, neither did they. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

As Archway took up the offer of the young researchers programme as a response to an OfSTED criticism about lack of provision in the school for their more able pupils, the expected outcomes of the children's research in this school seem to have been twofold. Firstly, it was seen to provide for the needs of the more able:

I think it is to challenge those who, for some children who can learn things but they really need to think outside the box and really challenge their thinking [...] it is more for the gifted children (V, Teacher/facilitator, Archway)

Secondly, it was seen to serve a purpose in meeting external demands:

I think teachers are under such pressure to produce results and find ways in which their school can, not exactly score points, but tick boxes. [...]. And I think that there is a very real danger that the teachers are just trying to satisfy OfSTED's requirements for doing everything that's asked of them. (P, Facilitator, Independent, Archway)

If, as seems to be the case here, expected outcomes were not communicated directly to the children's class teachers, it is tempting to surmise that the need for the school to 'tick boxes' may, indeed, have been more of a priority than meeting the needs of the children.

Where a school's covert priority is to satisfy the demands of external agencies such as OfSTED, then it is likely that young researcher initiatives will be compromised and that this will lead to disillusionment amongst the children, particularly where they perceive that their research projects have little impact. The thoughts of the children at Archway, who had been disappointed by the lack of interest shown in their research by others in the school were summarised by one child as follows:

[...] if it's not going to be any use to anyone, then why are you doing it? (YR, Archway)

It is clear that what is at issue here is not whether the choice of topic is predefined (as at Pagoda and Bridge) or whether children are allowed to choose their own topic (as at Archway, Rotunda and Tower). What seems to be important is that the purpose of their engagement with research process - that is, a genuine desire for empowerment - should be clearly defined and understood by schools before the start of the projects. At Rotunda, this was clearly acknowledged:

*(What do the children see as the purpose of doing this?)
I think if you asked them it would be about them doing something they really want to do.[...] It's all about the process ... I think the process is all about them enjoying what they are doing. Feeling they as a person have something valuable to offer. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)*

Despite this, even at Rotunda, the teacher expressed the view that there were also considerations of a more academic nature:

The process for me, as the teacher, is that I'm working on their reading and the quality of their writing. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

4.5.3.1. Summary

These findings seem to indicate that even where schools are motivated by a genuine desire to empower children, reconciling the nature and purpose of young researcher initiatives with the demands of the curriculum or the requirements of external regulatory bodies may lead to tensions and compromises. This raises the question of the extent to which schools feel they have to justify their engagement with extra-curricular activities during the school day. Also, it is clear that children are likely to be more motivated, or perceive their projects to be of more value, when there is the expectation that the outcomes will be of some use. This raises the question of how schools can create conditions that ensure that the children's research has a clear and identified purpose and that its potential to effect change in their school is positively acknowledged and endorsed.

4.5.4 Being able to work individually

Amongst the schools in this study, Archway was the only one where the young researchers were expected to work individually as this was seen as something that was appropriate for the more able children. Children who are supported by adults external to the school need, by the very nature of this set-up, to carry out a large part of their work between sessions without the assistance of their facilitator. This was the case for the children in Archway's Cohort 1. In contrast, some of the children at Rotunda also worked on individual projects but because this was done within the context of the whole class, the children did not experience having to work alone. The teachers at Archway commented that independent and individual work had proved to be problematic for some children:

Obviously independence is a bit of an issue as well because the children are so used to being directed and guided really closely that the minute they are given a bit of freedom they panic a bit, don't they?

(L, Class teacher, Archway)

Lack of support from within the school in between facilitated sessions seems to have exacerbated this problem:

[...] Obviously it's their kind of independent work but I think they ... you know, they're only children and I think they do need to be guided and I think some of the children found it quite stressful that they hadn't done as much as the other person had done [...] (T, Class teacher, Archway)

Moreover, here, independent working appears to have been equated with individual working.

I didn't think it was a good idea for two of the girls to work together in a pair [...]. They are more than capable of working on their own and if, by the end of it, you can get three sets of research or six sets of research then go for six. [...]. The only advantage of them working in a pair would have been they might have enjoyed it more. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

Had the girls been able to work together as they had wished to, it is possible that they would not have withdrawn from the programme:

With those two girls [...] I wonder if it's a problem with children of that age, they didn't really like working on something on their own, independently. [...] I think it would have carried on if they were in pairs. (L, Class teacher, Archway)

This is something the girls themselves confirmed:

- Better if we learnt to work together and work it out with everyone in groups or the whole class – so fun – delegate bits – if you're stuck, ask your friends – 'Our friends would understand what being stuck means'
- You can keep going when you're working with friends.
(YRs, Archway, Paired interview notes)

Another child in the same cohort agreed:

(So you needed the encouragement of an adult working with you?)
Well, only someone, even if it wasn't an adult, it would be nice to have someone. (YR, Archway)

Enjoyment might not have been the only advantage of allowing the girls to work together.

The school would have seen five completed projects rather than the four that were achieved and the fifth may well have been fairly substantial since two researchers can investigate one topic in greater depth or from two different angles.

Despite the difficulties encountered within Cohort 1 at Archway, Cohort 2 were also expected to work on individual projects although, this time around, the school had taken on responsibility for running the programme so all support for the children was internal. This proved to be advantageous, to the school at least, in making sure the children were on track with their work.

They were given deadlines for things and given quite a bit of help. [...] And there were still situations where perhaps the adult would say, "You need to do this you know by next week," and the child wouldn't do it. But because they had been asked to do it, if they didn't do it then the adults had the authority to say, "Well, you will have to do it, you will have to stay in over your lunchtime and do it because it needs to be done." So it was more kind of strict, I suppose. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

With this level of adult control, it is questionable whether the children were, in fact, working independently and this raises an interesting point. What does working independently mean? Working independently of other children or working independently of adults? For young researchers, this distinction could be crucial. Children can still be seen to be working independently when they work collaboratively, as the pair of girls at Archway wished to do, or when they rely on the support of their peers rather than the support of adults. The important factor seems to be independence from direct adult control and children being allowed to make choices about how they work. Evidence to support this interpretation is presented in the following section.

4.5.4.1 Summary

The data presented in this section are predominantly from Archway as this was the only school in this study to insist on young researchers working on individual projects. This was something some children there found difficult. There appears to have been some tension between the school's perception that more able children should be able to work independently and the children's expressed need for support, especially as they were expected to continue to work on their projects alone in between visits from an external facilitator. Schools planning to engage with CaR initiatives might need to consider what

'independent' working in this context might mean, especially as the data here indicates that when it means working alone, this can be a barrier to children's engagement with research process, especially when it is imposed.

4.5.5 Being able to work in a group and share ideas

It seems that when children worked together and called on each other for support rather than when they worked one-to-one with an adult, they felt they had more ownership of their work. This interpretation is supported by some of the interview comments offered by children and teachers from other schools in the study:

These people [peers, adults in school] didn't know what was going to happen so we were in control and that gave us the confidence to do it.

(YR, Pagoda)

[D, External facilitator] worked with them, he came in a few times but he commented on them being quite independent. They knew what they wanted to do, they were focused on what they wanted and he just kind of assisted them when they wanted and when they needed it. [...] So they weren't just guided by [external facilitator], they were guided by each other as well. They knew where their strengths lay and they went with, you know, who writes, who's good on the computer, who can speak [...] and they kind of used that to their best advantage. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

At all the schools in the study, apart from Archway, the children were allowed to make a choice about how they worked. This seems to have been very successful, not only in terms of completed projects but also in terms of positive outcomes for the children.

I think working as a team and working as a group [...] worked with this group of children, firstly because they had initiated it, it was their idea, it was how they wanted to work. [...] They were part of a group and part of a team so they had a responsibility to others as well and learning to kind of appreciate that rather than just be self-centred and working when they want to. (K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)

The engagement levels were very high. I think working in pairs helped enormously. (D, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

- It wasn't just each pair whispering about their thing. We all helped each other.

- *The other person might be more skilled, you share ideas and that helps you.*
- *They're always there to help you instead of, "Oh no, I've got to do this on my own."* (YRs, Pagoda)

The experiences of children carrying out research within a whole class group were, inevitably, different to those who work in smaller groups. However, the benefits of being able to work alongside their peers remained unchanged.

We are all, "Yeah, we're going to be researchers," and everyone is buzzing about it and I think that helps a great deal.
(S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

By letting them all do it you're building a culture of research in the classroom and there is a lot of peer support and discussion. (E, Facilitator, Independent, Rotunda, Tower)

4.5.5.1 Summary

These findings suggest that working together in pairs or in a group was beneficial to young researchers at the schools where the children were able to choose how they wanted to work, not least in terms of levels of engagement. Young researchers at Pagoda, their teacher and their external facilitator suggested benefits associated with young researchers working together which include not only sharing the workload but also the ownership and motivation which working independently of adult control appeared to bestow. These benefits were also acknowledged by adults working with young researchers at Bridge, Rotunda and Tower. Schools hoping to implement CaR initiatives will need to consider and discuss with the young researchers the importance of peer-peer support in these contexts and allow them to make decisions about how they work.

4.5.6 Being able to work with people from outside school

The schools in this study could be divided into three groups: those that relied heavily on external adults to facilitate research process with children (Bridge and Pagoda); those who had experience of working in this way before taking on responsibility for it themselves (Archway and Tower) and that in which the main facilitator was a member of the school

teaching staff (Rotunda). Each of these ways of working brought with them advantages and disadvantages.

From both the children's and adults' points of view, the impact on child-adult relationships was paramount. When facilitators were external to the school this was felt to have a mainly positive effect on relationships. For some children, the extra attention was appreciated while adults in school often perceived this to afford the children something special:

With a teacher it's just like something you do in school.
(YR, Archway, Paired interview notes)

It's different because it's only a few people and in the classes you are not necessarily going to be the focus of attention at all, are you? But this is more you doing it individually and somebody helping you individually to do it. You're not going to have that in class. (YR, Archway)

[The two girls who dropped out] were going to the teacher in the school and I think that had less impact because [...] when it's someone new it just seems a bit more special to them and they felt they could have someone with more expertise. (L, Class teacher, Archway)

The level of expertise offered by trained external facilitators was not only appreciated but seen as important in engaging the children.

I think it should be somebody from outside because [...] if you are coming in, you are the people from research, you are quite good at research and things and you can give them help whereas some teachers, they might be quite good at researching, but they have also got a class and they have got a job to do in school as well. (YR, Archway)

Once they're engaged, that's the key isn't it? [...] So I think it is the level of expertise, it's got to be someone who really can drive the children and point them in the right direction. [...] It's got to be someone who feels passionate about it as well. With [P, external facilitator] you can really tell how worthwhile you think it is and children can pick up on that so much.
(L, Class teacher, Archway)

However, the predominant advantage of the children working with external facilitators was seen to be relationships which were different to adult-child relationships as more usually experienced in school.

Some adults, like teachers, we don't always get taken seriously in school when we make suggestions. (YR, Bridge)

[...] the children very much enjoyed having someone else coming in from outside that wasn't a teacher, that was talking to them as an individual, as an adult, really, one to one. [...]. (N, Class teacher, Archway)

If you're working with people from school you say what they expect and not express your opinion, you can say what they want to hear but if you're talking to [External facilitator] or someone you can say what I want to this person and get to know them better. (YR, Pagoda)

We actually talked to adults, like, we've never really spoken to an adult properly or serious, we've only talked to them about work or school or something like that. (YR, Pagoda)

One factor at play here was that all external facilitators invited the children to call them by their first names. A peer of one group of young researcher could see the difference this might make:

If you was to call them Mister you're just going to think, "He's the boss of me, I've got to do whatever he says," but if you call them by their first name, you're gonna be able to, like, be friends with them and socialise with them. (Peer, Pagoda)

This was particularly significant for the children at Pagoda where the children's research training took place at venues other than the school premises. Here, they worked with three external facilitators in addition to the headteacher and a class teacher. On these occasions, everyone used first names. It was acknowledged that this challenged the norms of adult-child relationships in school:

[Calling adults by their first names] didn't undermine teacher/child relationships in any way. It actually strengthened it much more, to see them in a different role, to work on an equal level. (H, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

We don't always give them the situations that allow those [social] skills to be used legitimately and children have an expectation of what goes on in school, you know. (L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

This, however, was not seen as problematic although, back in school, the children had to address the same members of staff by their titles. Adults, too, have expectations of what goes on in school. Nevertheless, across these schools, adults talking to children *as individuals, on an equal level* and taking them *seriously* were felt to impact positively on the children's engagement with their research projects:

I think if they'd felt threatened or overpowered by [external facilitator] I think they would have been much more willing to let him do the work and tell them how to do it but they were very much, "Could we do this? Should we do this? Will this work? What about that?" And they were throwing questions about and actually thinking about it more because they were on an equal footing with him. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

This teacher also felt that, in contrast, children working with one of their teachers would be more likely to look to them for the answers and to *check they were doing it right* because that was the teacher's *role in school*; they would not, she said, *think about things much themselves*. Conversely, at Rotunda, a school small in size and in an area of socio-economic disadvantage where the children selected topics that were often sometimes of a sensitive nature, the ethos of the school and the relationships staff had with the children were felt to be important in supporting the children in their work:

[The school's] not just about academic achievement: it's very much about self-esteem and, "Who are you? Tell me about you." [...]. The ethos of the school is very caring so I think they have got quite used to feeling like they can trust us. In general, the staff [...] are very good at touching on issues so maybe the children felt that we already do some of that so it's quite comfortable for them. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

Another advantage of working with external facilitators was that taking on the initiative did not add significantly to the teachers' workload:

I think [External facilitator] was a crucial part of the success of the project because [...] it is far too difficult for the teachers because

there were so many other activities going on and this could just be seen as another project that they don't have time for.

(H, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

[...] it's just another thing to think about with so many things going on.

(L, Class teacher, Archway)

However, some difficulties were experienced when schools worked with external facilitators. At Archway, finding opportunities to communicate was perceived as problematic for both adults and children:

The children go off [to work with the external facilitator] and because of the nature of a school you don't get that time to really kind of talk about stuff. You know, it's just, like, a general lack of communication that happens throughout the school, that was kind of one of the major frustrations that we didn't really know what they were doing.

(T, Class teacher, Archway)

You know, [the young researchers] see the person then the person goes and they kind of forget about it. [If] they were seeing the person all the time [...] it would kind of jog them along a bit more.

(T, Class teacher, Archway)

Here, this problem seemed to be overcome when the school took over the facilitation and the children were able to access more easily the adults who were supporting them. For external facilitators, difficulties tended to be of a practical nature:

Once the children's exams had finished they just had so much other stuff on that it wasn't so easy to get access to the children and work with the children during curriculum time [...]. (K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)

It took just a bit of time to realise that if you tried to negotiate with the team leader [...] this didn't necessarily permeate down to the individual teachers or indeed the children. And even if you phoned up and left a message, it didn't work. (P, Facilitator, Independent, Archway)

Working with external facilitators could make the initiative seem to be something that was 'separate' from the school. This did not happen at Pagoda where a teacher and the headteacher were involved during the children's training and seemed less likely to happen

where the school took on responsibility for supporting the children between the sessions the children had with external facilitators:

*(Do you think it's important for the teachers to have some ownership?)
I think if it needs to move, I think it is desperately needed because [external facilitator] filled me in constantly with what was going on [...] and so it was like, OK, I know where they are and then I know where I need to take them. And so [...] because I actually had something to do with them and had to give them time and we would talk about it then it was very much a team.*

(S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

Nonetheless, even when the programme was initiated by a teacher within the school, this did not guarantee the engagement of other members of staff. This was recognised during the first year of the initiative at Rotunda where the teacher initiating the project was working part-time alongside another teacher:

There were times when she felt I was taking over her class [...] and I think she just felt pushed out of it. [...] She had no ownership of it. She didn't make those links with [curriculum subjects] so that meant I was coming in and doing something quite isolated that she was half part of really and when I needed for the work to move on and I needed for the children to get to certain stages it just became more difficult.

(R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

This provides a good illustration of the problems identified by an external facilitator who worked at Archway. She attributed some of the practical problems she encountered to lack of engagement on the part of the school's teaching staff:

It has got to be important [...] to the school and to the teacher who is doing it, or any teachers who are involved in it [...]. I think that to make it work properly, you would have to have a real commitment to wanting your pupils to learn this. (P, Facilitator, Independent, Archway)

The need for committed support when taking on the initiative in a whole class was clearly identified:

[...] for a [full-time] class teacher to do this, you need to have someone that can go and make a phone call or make sure a children wrote a letter and make sure it gets posted. [...]. One person

couldn't do it, so how would you train that person up to have the same philosophy as you? [...] Well, you'd have to train the staff before the children.
(R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

However, in this case, support which extended beyond the practical was critical:

[...] if you've got some connection [...] someone says, "How's it going? What did you do? Can I come and help with that?" [...] So, one, it's about me and my philosophy and that's why I tapped into it so easily. Two, I'm in a school where I would easily have been given the opportunity to do this, but three, I had someone encouraging me, supporting me so it didn't get just shoved away. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

A further disadvantage of setting up this initiative as a isolated project within the school was that it was totally reliant on the teacher who was facilitating it. The class teacher at Tower, for example, who, at the time of interview had just begun a whole class initiative, was initially very enthusiastic:

I have said, you know, "We are doing this, we are going to work through, we are going to find problems, we are going to overcome any of those problems as and when we find them." I said, "I don't know what the problems are going to be, there may be no problems." [...] So they are up and ready for anything. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

However, when the children had begun their own research, the teacher was unexpectedly away from school for a long period. Consequently, the children were unable to complete their projects because there was no-one else in the school who could take this on.

4.5.6.1 Summary

These extracts suggest that external facilitation was seen by young researchers and teachers at the schools in this study as mainly positive. The enthusiasm, knowledge and skills that an 'expert' researcher can lend to the initiatives was acknowledged as valuable by some teachers and children in encouraging the children's engagement with research process. Moreover, external facilitators were understandably seen to have time to work with the children in ways that teachers, with their other responsibilities, did not. However, the

principal reason for favouring external facilitators seemed to be the nature of the relationships which they were seen to build with the young researchers, relationships which both children and teachers identified as being different from the adult-child relationships the children more usually experienced in school. The use of first names, in particular, was seen to promote a more equal footing for discussion which the children appeared to find liberating, especially when they felt they were being listened to and taken seriously.

Nevertheless, some less positive aspects of young researchers working with external facilitators were also identified. These included communication problems between facilitators and school staff. In particular, where schools relied on external facilitators to work with the children without teaching staff having any direct involvement, as at Archway, the initiative was perceived as something completely separate to the children's day-to-day work in school. At Tower and Pagoda, in contrast, where teachers had more direct involvement in the initiatives, either through attending training sessions with the children or working jointly with the external facilitator, this particular problem was not identified. Lack of positive engagement with the initiative by a school as a whole was identified as problematic, not only for external facilitators but also for teachers taking on the facilitator's role in their own schools, as at Rotunda. Here, the teacher suggested that support from within the school for both her and the young researchers was crucial.

4.5.7 Being able to get help from my friend or teacher when I need it

The data presented in previous sections show that the young researchers valued and were motivated by the support of their friends. Both internal and external adult support was also valued and felt to be necessary for the successful implementation of CaR initiatives, not only by the children but also by the facilitating adults. This section examines other kinds of support identified in this study and some problems related to these.

One issue was the level of support offered to the children by the adults. This needed to be sensitively judged if the children were to feel sufficiently supported while, at the same time, retaining ownership of their work. Adults did not always get this right. Trying to help was sometimes seen by the children as not very helpful at all:

I tried to get him enthusiastic about it and he just, he felt it was too much work. [...] he said he found it too hard, well, he just didn't understand what to do. When I had given them a timetable for what they should do where and when. (V, Teacher/facilitator, Archway)

We got a sheet of paper telling us what to do but it didn't, we didn't actually get any practice at doing it [...] because it didn't tell us how to do things. (YR, Archway)

Trying to help could also be seen as 'taking over':

-[External facilitator] kept interrupting, 'cause [facilitator] kept, during a group interview with me and [my partner] she was just telling children not to be silly and she kept just asking some questions and sort of when they answered, said, "Oh, we won't go into that," and so we had to keep saying, "[Name], we are doing the interview!"

-It was a bit annoying because it is our research, she's done loads of interviews and we had never done an interview. I suppose she was helping us a bit

-I think it's good that she was trying to get everything quiet.

-She was still asking questions. It would be alright if she just sat there, that was the whole point, if you had forgotten a question then she could have said something.

*-But we didn't forget because we had a sheet of questions.
(YRs, Bridge)*

Despite good intentions on the part of adults, there seems to have been a fine line between helping and removing or reducing ownership of the children's research. The facilitator at Bridge, it appeared, had tried very carefully not to step over this line:

*What I mean by supervising is just being there, you don't have to do anything and just maybe kind of things like just making sure that they had the resources they needed, if it was a laptop or paper and pens, things like that, just making sure, and answering any questions but just giving them the chance to work, even if I wasn't helping directly. [...] They decided what they wanted to do really, what work they wanted to do, my job was to maybe make their choices kind of clear to them if they didn't know.
(K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)*

Others, too, acknowledged the difficulty of ‘getting this right’:

Sometimes with their methodologies [...] I had to keep talking to them about, “What does this question ... what’s the answer going to tell you?. Sometimes [...] I knew some of those questions weren’t going to be worth anything for those children [...]. For some of those children they still didn’t realise that that was a waste of information for them but that’s the level they’re at. If I’ve told the children, “This is for you, this is your work,” and then I keep changing it, they lose ownership.

(R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

It’s a self-actualisation of the children by their questioning, by the questions they create [that] helps them to take ownership of it. [...] They know that every word that people are answering in the questionnaires and in their own interviews, every word of the question is their own, it’s what they want to find out. [...] A child has to imagine, has to understand what they want to know and find a way of asking it. And then ask it.

(D, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

Other stages of the research process presented similar difficulties:

I did find it very difficult when they were trying to find out what other people had done. I found it hard to get information that was accessible to children of that age. [...] So do you read it all yourself first and decide what they are going to read or do you present them with lots more than they can actually cope with? [...] in a way it would be more honest if we, if we didn’t do it [...] and accept that they wouldn’t have the time or opportunity [...] and therefore the literature review will be minimal and things that probably an adult has led them to. Which then takes away from their ownership.

(Adult P, Facilitator, Independent, Archway)

Although finding a solution to this problem might be difficult, sometimes just taking steps

to help raise the children’s awareness of their topics was seen to be enough:

Even when I hadn’t started my project she’d bring in little clippets on bullying [...] that she’d find in the newspaper. It was really interesting reading them ‘cause I wouldn’t normally like, um, just see it [...] it made me have more awareness of it. (YR, Archway)

What I wanted them to do before they actually started thinking about questionnaires was to actually get a bit of background information because as a child they only have their own experience of this [...]. So going to the library and finding all these leaflets, that’s quite amazing for them. So we actually spent quite a bit of

time giving them time to find out about their own topic. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

Another area where children needed support was in gaining access to potential participants who were external to the school. At Bridge and Pagoda this wasn't a problem since the children were investigating school-based issues. However, at Rotunda, where children had identified topics which often related to their lives outside school, they were reliant on their facilitating adult having the time to help. However, the difficulties experienced were not always in the control of the school:

They can come to me [when] I'm not class based and when we were doing the questionnaires that actually did happen, they would constantly come to me and say, "Don't forget you've promised to photocopy or whatever," [and] they could come to me and I can sit with them to ring appropriate people and arrange the interviews. [...] You know, there were people [...] who didn't actually ever get back to the children that phoned and that was a huge disappointment for those children.
(R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

Other, more practical problems related to spaces within which to work and to using computers. These problems are not likely to be specific to the CaR initiatives. However, due to the scale of their projects, the impact of computer related problems was sorely felt when young researchers lost their work:

We hadn't logged on to our year when we went to do our work on the computers, we had done it all and we had done everything and we went to save it, we couldn't save it in anyone's because our names weren't [there]. (YR, Bridge)

They started work this term and then the computer system broke down and none of the stuff they had written got saved and all that kind of stuff.
(E, Facilitator, Independent, Rotunda)

This suggests that adults need to find ways to help the children avoid these problems. At Rotunda, for example, the children suggested that having 'memory sticks' would be useful and the school was able to supply these. However, access to computers itself was sometimes problematic, although in some schools this was less of a problem than in others:

Sometimes we didn't have enough time in the ICT suite. (YR, Rotunda)

You would be constrained [if] young researchers time has to coincide with my ICT time [...] then everything backs up. Yes, I think it quite essential that [...] the children have access to everything they need [...] when they need it. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

They've got extraordinarily good provision for a primary school. They've got banks of laptops which the children can draw on [...] We always had enough space. We had the equipment we needed. (D, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

This is one particular area where adults, especially those external to the school, appreciated support:

[...] like many schools that I go to the computers often weren't working [...] and it was very problematic because [...] the organisation was not made high priority, not high enough priority I think, by the, I suppose the team who were teaching Year 6. (P, Facilitator, Independent, Archway)

[C] was always working with her class [...] but she would always talk to me about things and she helped me a lot with any problems with the computers [...] she would always make sure that something happened. (D, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

While at Pagoda space in which the children's work could be supported was always provided, in others it was at a premium. This was especially difficult when the young researchers were withdrawn from class to work on their projects during curriculum time:

(Have you always had a room to work in?)

-Yes, but ...

-Sometimes it was really, really, really loud. Like if we were doing an interview and we came in here it would be really, really, really, noisy.

-Yes, but sometime there are teachers working in there.

-We have to put up with it.

-After school we had room to work in which was the ICT room so we had computers if we needed them and then during lessons, that's when we found it quite hard. (YRs, Bridge)

One of the problems in this school is the space. They did most of it out here, in the corridor. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

He did one-to-one session outside my door. Being a small school, it doesn't lend itself to group work.[...] and at the time the library was out of action [...] so yes, it was very much an issue for him and sometimes I don't know how he did it without going completely mad. Just the whole issue of being able to hear and talk to them and work with them.

(S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

4.5.7.1 Summary

In this section, the data have suggested that sensitively judged adult facilitation was crucial if young researchers were to feel genuine ownership of their research. Young researchers at Bridge attested to such ownership being threatened by what they saw as adult interference. At this school and at Pagoda, Archway and Rotunda, adult facilitators recognised the importance of achieving a balance between adult support and adult management but felt that this was sometimes difficult to accomplish. The processes of careful consideration and reflection which they described appear to have been important in helping them to avoid 'taking over'. This element of facilitative practice will be crucial if adults are to successfully engage children in research process in primary school settings since, as data presented earlier have shown, helpful adult-child relationships in the context of CaR initiatives are different to those normally experienced in schools. Of a more practical nature, but apparently no less noteworthy, was the provision of resources since this was always mediated by adults in school. Such issues included photocopying and access to external participants. However, difficulties relating to the provision of spaces within which the young researchers could work and to computer access when this was needed seemed to have been particularly significant. At Pagoda, for example, where this was well organised, timely access to work spaces and to computers was seen to have enabled the children to engage in their work effectively. Schools undertaking CaR initiatives will need to consider how such resources can be organised, even within existing constraints, not least because, in the other schools in this study, non-working computers and searching for appropriate spaces in which to work were both responsible for significant amounts of wasted time.

4.5.8 Getting enough time to do the work

There is no doubt that, for most of the children, undertaking research projects involved dealing with a significant workload. While this was not always seen negatively,

There wasn't enough time. There's an enormous amount of work [...] but it was worth it in the end. (YR, Pagoda)

for some, this was more of a problem:

[...] he had obviously been upset at home and worried at home because his mum came in and then said she didn't want him to do it because it was causing him too much stress. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

Nevertheless, being able to get work finished was often problematic:

The whole thing sort of got rushed and it didn't get finished in a good way and some of the kids never really did finish analysing their data so there are a lot of things to be learned from that. (E, Facilitator, Independent, Tower)

This was especially problematic when the young researchers were in Year 6, and also preparing for their SATs:

Sometimes it was a bit of a hassle because you had homework a well, so, like, just before SATs there was homework everywhere [...]. (YR, Archway)

But it is quite a tricky one because you don't want to push them and do this work compared to their SATs work because you do want them to do well in their SATs which is of course for the school. (V, Teacher/facilitator, Archway)

[...] it's still not enough time. [...]. I think if I didn't have the pressures of having Year 6 and the SATs, bearing in mind we had some seriously poor results last year so we're under enormous pressure so get our results up this year and I do find that quite hard. I do worry about that. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

I think Year 6 as a beast is, it is not a good thing for new initiatives in a way because of time. You know, the SATs are a constant pressure, a constant thorn. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

The last two extracts are taken from interviews with the two teachers who had implemented or had begun to implement the initiative with their whole classes of Year 6 children. Despite these pressures, they had been confident, initially, that they could make this work:

When I went through the planning for Year 6 [...] I thought, "Oh, my goodness." Actually there was so much that was relating across to the children as researchers.

(But you have to be creative to do that, don't you?)

[...] Maybe that's because of the level that I'm at in terms of job level or because of experience but I'm confident enough to say, "That's where that's at and this is going to have an impact," and actually go forward and do it and I have the power to be able to say, "We're doing it."

(R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

When [external facilitator] approached me and said would I do it with the whole class that was one of my key things that I knew the rest of the class were desperate to be involved in this project. They really desperately wanted to do it. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

However, there were particular difficulties in implementing the programme during curriculum time at Tower which did not arise at Rotunda since at Tower the children were placed in sets for some lessons:

I can't even go, kind of, "Today we're going to do our researching work," because half of them aren't there. So even though it's a literacy based thing [...] I can't build it into that time because then one group of children would be further ahead and as it is a whole class it can't work like that.

(S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

In both schools, finding time for the work proved to be more difficult than expected due not only to pressures of the curriculum but also to other activities going on in school and to other teacher responsibilities:

Sometimes you have big like gaps between the times so if we done a little bit of research, then we had a big, like two week gap and then we go back sometime we forgot what we was going to do. (YR, Rotunda)

If you imagine the weeks ticking by, my timetable being squashed out and various bits and pieces. It could have been two months, when they started planning their own methodology, since they looked at [data collection methods] and I think it was too drawn out.

(R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

When we say, "Right, we are going to do a research thing," they are like, "Yeah, rock on. How long have we got?" and you'd say, "We have only got this time," and they are like, "Ohhh," and you can see that, "Oh god, we are not going to get this done, are we?" That almost, resignation, in their voices and, "Are we going to get more time this week?" [...] I am finding the work too bitty [...]. They desperately want to do it but it is literally because they are hanging on with their fingertips to the bits of information they are sort of getting as we go along. They are not able to immerse themselves in it. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

For these teachers, the possibilities of working with Year 5 children rather than those in Year 6 was seen as potentially advantageous:

So I think if I had a Year 5 class and I was full-time in the classroom it would be easier [...]. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

Time is a little bit more of a luxury in Year 5. [...] I think [external facilitator who worked with some Year 5 children during the previous year] would have been very frustrated if he was coming in and out at this time [...]. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

At Pagoda, where the young researchers were in Year 5, the demands of the curriculum did not seem to have such an impact on the children completing their work.

I don't think they were daunted by the workload at all. I don't think they thought, "Oh, no, we've got all this to do." I think they saw it as, they just took it on and got on with it and worked and some of them asked if they could stay in and do more on it. So I don't think they were concerned with the workload because they enjoyed it, they were part of it and it was about them. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

Here, a clearly defined time period during which the children's research had to be completed had been imposed by the initiating external organisation. As has already been discussed, these children were strongly motivated by the choices they had been able to make. Bearing in mind that these children did not have the pressures of the SATs to contend with, having to complete the work within a short time period seems to have been

positively helpful. The possibility of doing this was raised by others even when undertaking a sustained piece of work was thought to be academically beneficial.

Discussed lack of ‘oomph’ and the difficulty of keeping project going. Considering ‘short and ‘fat’ rather than ‘long and thin’ to maintain excitement and motivation (had been October to June this year, exceeding expectation of Easter finish) (O, Headteacher, Archway, Interview notes)

I think that from what we did last year [R, class teacher] knows if you try and split it across the whole year, kids lose interest. They want it short and fat, they don’t want it long and thin. (E, Facilitator, Independent, Rotunda)

One approach which helped to shorten the overall length of the programme was where the children started their own research alongside training sessions so that they could apply what they were learning as soon as possible rather than wait until after the training element of the programme was complete:

[Instead of] pure training then you go off and do your research, [the class teacher’s] model is a kind of more consecutive concurrent model rather where the children are getting into their own research quite early. ‘Cause the children just switch off, they forget what they have done. (E, Facilitator, Independent, Rotunda)

There is no reason to suppose that working in this way would remove the element of ‘stamina’ from the process. This was identified as beneficial, not least because it is not seen to be required for curriculum work:

[...] we don’t have many opportunities to do something extended that they keep carrying on and [...] it’s really good for stamina, I think. I think children are so used to doing a short task that finishes within the sessions. (L, Class teacher, Archway)

Finding time for the young researchers to work on their research projects seems to have been no less a problem at the schools where children were working with external facilitators. Sometimes, timetabling this work this did not appear to present particular difficulties:

- Sometimes we'd be taken out of lessons [...] that weren't very important.
- Like singing
- And at lunch, we'd do it at lunchtime quite a few days. (YRs, Bridge)

We did use [...] lesson time but we did use it when the lesson wasn't important. (YR, Pagoda)

However, sometimes the children felt resentful about missing lessons adults perceived as unimportant:

We really did miss out on things that we loved and it was really annoying because things that you did love like Art your things just had to be thrown away when others were saying, "Come on, you've got to do your research, too," and sometimes you just weren't in the mood and I love Art. (YR, Pagoda)

When it was fun stuff like art or drama or school council or break some teachers think it's not necessary and I missed lots. We always miss the fun stuff. (YR, Archway, Paired interview)

An insightful comment by one of the young researcher's friends at Archway explained how these situations might have arisen:

If the teachers don't know what you are doing they might think it is really, really, really, fun and so they might make you miss out on D.T. or something, they don't realise that it is actually quite a lot of work that you are putting into it. So if they know exactly what you are doing then they might realise that you might not be wanting to miss out on D.T. or Art or something. (Peer, Archway)

This clearly speaks to the difficulties encountered with lack of information and communication signalled earlier and the need for the young researchers' teachers to know what is involved in the CaR initiatives in terms of content and workload.

Providing extra time for the children to work on their projects while their facilitators were not in school was less of a problem in some schools than in others:

[...] it wasn't a major problem but we did need to consider how much lesson time they were missing but they always got their breaks, we made sure of that. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

Indeed, the children at Bridge seemed to have some control over initiating this:

When they were doing this project sometimes they would want to [...] do some work on it during the school day, do some interviews and they would get permission from the teachers, sometimes the teacher would let them.

(K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)

However, the very fact that children were working with external facilitators or working outside the classroom between research sessions contributed to the sense of ‘separateness’ which was highlighted earlier as a result of lack of information and communication:

I kept saying to these three [children in the class], “If you need any time then please come and ask me and I will give you some time.” You know, it wouldn’t have mattered to me if they had missed a literacy lesson or two or a maths lesson because they could easily sort of pick up but I think that they rarely ever did either told me they did keep it in a bubble or, alternatively, they were all on top of it and I was never sure which one.

(N, Class teacher, Archway)

The same teacher felt that these arrangements were not ideal:

If I were to make an overall criticism I would say that it has been a bit of a bolt on the last couple of years. [We should look at] how we make it more integral not just to their work but also to the work of the class.

(N, Class teacher, Archway)

This was a point of view supported by an external facilitator at the school:

The children who are involved should be, not exactly let off some of the other work, but that some of the work they are doing in some areas could be replaced by some of the work they are doing for the research, so that the research isn’t an add-on but it does become more of their experience in school. (P, Facilitator, Independent, Archway)

However, the class teacher acknowledged time to be a limiting factor:

It is tricky as a class teacher. Of course, your responsibilities are to thirty of them and if you’ve got one or two doing particular projects, actually creating that sort of time for them to let you know precisely what it is that they’re, doing it can be quite tricky. (N, Class teacher, Archway)

4.5.8.1 Summary

The findings in this section suggest that shortage of time was seen as a significant factor when implementing CaR initiatives in the schools in this study, both over the long term and from day to day. Difficulties were exacerbated particularly when the children's projects were perceived as separate from normal curriculum provision. At Archway, for example, this was felt to hinder the integration of the children's research into their normal school work and experiences. Here, and at Pagoda, the children felt some resentment about missing favourite lessons in order to have time to complete their projects. However, even where attempts had been made to integrate the CaR initiatives into the curriculum, as at Rotunda and Tower, finding time for the work involved was problematic. The demands of the curriculum and those associated with externally imposed testing were seen as onerous in this respect. This was particularly so in Year 6. Although shortage of time and the inflexibility of the curriculum are issues which are not likely to be addressed easily in primary schools, those wishing to implement CaR initiatives in these settings might consider alleviating some of the pressures by involving children in Year 5 rather than those in Year 6. This will be important in at least attempting to lessen the impact which shortage of time has on the children's (and their teachers') engagement with their research work.

4.5.9 Learning different skills and interesting things

Interpretations of data presented in the preceding sections have had as their focus the implementation and running of the research initiatives in the five schools. The three remaining sections of this chapter look at perceived outcomes of the programmes. The first of these focuses on the children's increased skills and knowledge.

Interestingly, increased knowledge of the topics being investigated was rarely mentioned as an outcome by either the children or the adults. When it was, this was in rather vague terms:

What I really liked about the training is that you got to see what other people thought about what you were doing. (YR, Archway)

It's good to find out more about things, like questions that you wanted to know and look more deeply into. (YR, Bridge)

The other outcomes, I suppose, were the results of the research which was interesting. [...] There's a lot more individuality in the school [...] but it hadn't occurred to us before that you could actually prove it.

(L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

Instead, emphasis was placed on increased skills and knowledge relating to the children's training and research process:

It [...] helps you learn a lot of things, and lots of us learnt what new words meant and it's fun and it's really interesting and it gives you experience of what it's like to be a researcher. (YR, Bridge)

Before, we thought well, people have different opinions, we knew that, but we didn't know as much as we know now, from what we've done. But now we know everyone has their own opinion and it's good if you share that with everybody else. (YR, Pagoda)

I could do very simple research but I couldn't do anything as big as I've done [...] there was stuff like typing up the Bibliography, I found I could do that eventually but it was very tricky. (YR, Archway)

Adults working with the children suggested that other, more abstract, ideas relating to research process had proved to be quite difficult for some children to grasp. Nonetheless, these were seen to have had a significant impact on the children's thinking processes:

One of the hardest things was for the children to have some information and for them to realise what was really important in that. [...] The ability to pick those important bits of information out and to put them together is really hard but actually that's what we want to do, we want to challenge children into thinking at a higher level and that's what this work has given them. (R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

I asked [young researcher] how he was going to [...] select children to work with him and he said, "I will just trick them." [...] He was just starting at that level of thinking, really. And then to actually be reiterating the kind of ethics of doing research and the responsibility that comes with it [during dissemination]! I kind of

felt that it changed him in that sense, in a sense he was acting more responsibly [...] and realising that through his work he was able to actually take a caring approach rather than wanting to deceive children. (K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)

Sometimes, perceived outcomes exceeded expectations:

I didn't really know what was going to happen in regards to the process. Perhaps the outcomes are different to the research outcomes, what we actually got out of the research. My outcomes are more to do with the social side and the skills they've developed. [...] They really learnt to think about it and analyse. (C, Class teacher, Pagoda)

The expected outcome was they would skill themselves up in a technique that was new to them so they would learn to interview, they would learn how to communicate in a different way [and] that was one skill that was amazing, this ability now to ask, um, probing questions, especially in the interviews, that require more than a yes or no answer. (L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

The directions in which the children's new skills developed was also surprising.

One of the most striking things was girls and boys worked together which they don't tend to do at that age[...] they saw the good in each other and they talked about it too so we were quite positive this was happening. If one of the boys felt they hadn't conducted an interview properly, "What did I do wrong?", asking one of the girls. Well, extraordinary. Adults' questions. [...] The maturity with which they're expressing insights about the work they are doing [...] they actually understand what the education process has been in this. So surprising, you know. [...] It's the process that's produced that change. The children could see how they were changing. (D, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

It is clear that for the children at Bridge and Pagoda, valued outcomes were attributed to the learning processes involved in the processes of research training and active research. At Tower, the small group of children who had become young researchers while in Year 5 acted as peer mentors in their class the following year. This was felt by their teacher as an opportunity for the original cohort to reinforce their learning and skills:

It has cemented everything that they have done and it is a justification of what they've done and, you know, "We have worked through this and now we can impart our knowledge onto somebody

else and then they are going to be able to do it,” and then, you know, it is that focus for learning. [...] “I can lead you into the light and show you what to do”.

(S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

The facility to call on the skills and knowledge of existing young researchers in the school in this way supports the suggestion that Year 6, the final year in English primary schools, is not necessarily the best year from which to select research groups. However, in this particular instance, it is not known what the impact of peer mentoring might have been as the programme ended when the teacher was absent from school for a long period of time.

There is also evidence that the schools themselves could see the young researchers gaining in skills which were valued as part of the school curriculum. Indeed, the headteacher at Pagoda suggested that engaging in research process might be a valuable alternative to engaging in some more usual classroom activities:

When our children are out working with [adult facilitators] on this research project, their language skills, their linguistic development, the range of vocabulary they’ve got now coming back from doing that is far more than if they’d stayed in the class and done another hour on the Tudors, you know.

(L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

This opinion was by the class teacher at Rotunda; she was convinced of the value of working through research process as a whole class, with much of the work embedded in the curriculum:

I could really see the impact of their writing from their introductions in some writing we did later but it’s also about the synthesis, [...] these children are bringing different ideas together, things they would never have thought of before and that’s influencing their own opinions and own thoughts. Children as researchers is offering them all the opportunity [...] Now [some children] may not, academically, appear to be bright but I think they still have the ability to listen to other people’s opinions and bring them together, to sift through information and to pick out important bits and analyse it. (R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

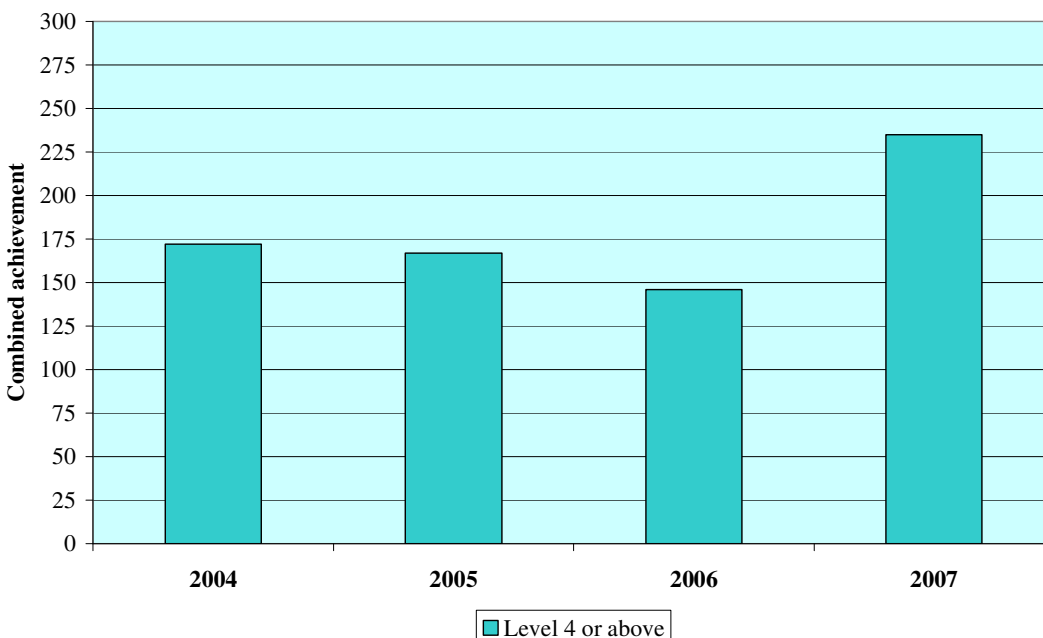
In fact, she believed engagement in research process would have a direct impact on the SATs results for those children. This cohort had, she explained, had ‘absolutely dire results’ in Year 5:

It would be good if you came back once we had actually had our SATs results because I’m really hoping to argue that this has had an impact.

(I was going to ask you what you are going to do if the SATs results don’t actually reflect all the work you have put in.)

I don’t believe that they won’t. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

It seems this confidence was not misplaced. The SATs results for this cohort (shown in Figure 4.18) were markedly better than those of Year 6 cohorts at the same school in previous years, exceeding the school’s *wildest expectations* (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, personal communication).



The percentage of pupils at the school achieving Level 4* or above in the three core subjects (English, Maths and Science) are added together, making the maximum score for any school 300.

*Level 4 is the level children are expected to reach by the end of Year 6 (10-11 years).

Source: OfSTED.

FIGURE 4.18 SATs results at Rotunda School 2004-2007

It is not known if the school was running other initiatives which might have contributed to this striking improvement in the test results. So, while it is not possible to make any claims

here the results do suggest that the young researchers initiative, implemented as it was in this school, did have a positive impact on their learning. The following extracts indicate that teachers who had worked through the CaR initiatives with their pupils also benefitted. Although they do not relate to direct outcomes for the young researchers, it seems reasonable to suppose that the children might have benefitted from their teachers' reflections on classroom practice which engagement in the initiatives had prompted:

I learnt a lot more about their experiences [...] because we discussed it in class. [Two chosen topics of racism and the experiences of travellers' children are given as lengthy examples.] It was acceptable to talk about this, suddenly it wasn't a taboo for them anymore. [...] It was through children as researchers that those boundaries went down and we were allowed to be more open and talk about things. It gave us a route to be able to do that. It just hadn't happened [before]. [...] But suddenly these children, they have broken down that boundary. [...] You're so driven by lesson objectives and the National Curriculum or your strategies that, even with your PHSE, I've got an objective already from the QCA or something [...] whereas, when you start with children as researchers, [...] you're also giving the children the opportunity to pick those subjects [...] and that enables me to know these children that bit more [...] and it helps me to question myself as a teacher because I thought I knew my children. I'm not sure I would have always given children credit for being able to have such complex discussions. [...] Yes, and it's about their understanding of themselves and the depth of these issues.

(R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

(Have there been any outcomes for you as a class teacher?)

[...] Making sure they understand the reasons behind everything and that they have choices and making sure their choices are listened to. Which you know, is very important, because you know the nature of the beast is that we guide [...] them through. And I think it has flagged up some questions sort of for me, you know. How far do I take it? When do I steer it in a different direction. So I think it is flagging up sorts of things like that, that I need to think about some more. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

4.5.9.1 Summary

The findings presented in this section suggest a range of outcomes for the children who took part in the CaR initiatives in their schools. These relate predominantly to the development of research knowledge and skills through engagement in research process rather than to increased knowledge of the children's research topics as a product of this.

Children at Archway, Bridge and Pagoda gave understanding of research process, increased vocabulary, an understanding that others' opinions might differ from their own and bibliographic skills as examples of perceived outcomes, corroborating and expanding on those outcomes identified by young researchers during the participatory activities. While it might be expected that the children themselves would not have identified the development of higher order thinking skills perceived by teachers at Pagoda and Rotunda, the identification by the facilitator at Bridge of increased ethical awareness and by adults at Pagoda of increased communication skills also corroborate findings emerging from the participatory activities. These findings, too, highlighted the importance of research process rather than product.

4.5.10 Becoming more confident and not feeling shy

This section focuses on increased confidence as an outcome of the children's engagement in the CaR initiatives. This particular outcome was identified by the children and witnessed by the adults working with them. Again, this was often attributed to the processes involved during the children's training and research:

I think it made me more confident because before, I was really quiet and I didn't say things but now I feel more confident. (YR, Pagoda)

It was a huge confidence booster for them, they felt, I think they had that grown-up feeling. And it was, they were being allowed to follow their ideas. If it took them in a specific direction then that was fine. I think they actually grew from that. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

It boosts confidence [...] I think it is being trusted with something serious, they believe, rightly so, [...] that what they find out is important to us [...] Suddenly there is a real audience and there are real people who trust them. [...] In schools where they change and shape what they've learned about research into something that is meaningful for them [...] I think is what perhaps gets them into profound learning and perhaps that's why it has such an impact on self esteem and confidence. (H, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

This speaks to the importance of the children feeling they have genuine ownership of their research. Indeed, increased confidence was evident during the children's presentation of their work, where the young researchers appeared to respond positively to having respectful audiences and to being the 'experts':

So it's really improved our skills and, like, our self-esteem and [...] we can say, we have done this and we know what to do. (YR, Pagoda)

Right at the beginning of the year they did a conference for [borough] teachers and they really listened to them and when someone listens to you, you start to talk more, don't you? And you start to feel you've got something to say. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

The process [...] builds their confidence to that point [...] where they are able to [present their work] because they have worked through it. You know, you're not asking them to present something they haven't got ownership of. They have done it. They know what it is. They have worked through it. They have grown in confidence through finding out this information for themselves. (S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

It is too early to know if such gains in confidence will have a lasting impact for these young researchers. However, there is some evidence that within the relatively short period covered by this study, some sustained effect was seen:

The headteacher ...we did an assembly some time ago now and the children went to the front and she said to me, "Gosh," she said, "your class have become so confident. How they stand up." [...]. (R, Class teacher/Facilitator, Rotunda)

I think it is exactly what the advisory teacher said. I mean, I think her words were something like, "Yes, I can see that the product isn't necessarily that brilliant in some cases but, by god, you can see what the kids have got out of the process." So there is growth, there is learning, there is increased awareness, self-confidence [...] So, if you're product oriented [...] I think that strangles innovation. (E, Facilitator, Independent, Rotunda)

4.5.10.1 Summary

The findings presented in this section suggest that engaging in CaR initiatives leads to increases in the children's confidence. Again, this corroborates findings emerging from the

participatory activities. At Rotunda, Tower and Pagoda the key to this was identified as the process involved. Indeed, evidence from the interviews presented earlier has suggested that, at these schools, research process was particularly valued for its potential to empower the children. The findings here also confirm those presented earlier which highlight the importance of facilitating conditions which engender young researchers' ownership of their research projects. This seems to be imperative in fostering increases in self-esteem.

4.5.11 Being able to tell teachers, adults and children what I have found out.

This final section of the analysis attending to perceived outcomes reveals some debate about how the children should disseminate their findings and, indeed, the purpose for doing so. Integral to this debate are the different levels of importance attached to the process that the children experience and the product of their work.

During the course of this study, methods of dissemination of children's research findings appeared to have been largely restricted to written reports and MS PowerPoint presentations. However, across the schools in this study, written reports were seen by both children and adults as difficult for some young researchers to produce and something for which support was necessary:

- *I'm not experienced enough to do all the ethics and the discussions and stuff when you are writing up.*
- *[...] um, getting your own data and looking at it, I could do that, but I couldn't write up my thing on my own.*
- *I could do the research myself but I need adult guiding or a more experienced researcher for my report.* (YRs, Archway)

I don't think it is very easy for children to produce written reports. [...] But it is something that is where the adult can come in and help them to structure their presentation and ideas. [...] For some of them because that is what they are aspiring to and this is what they want to achieve because they knew that they couldn't do it before. By doing it they get a real sense of satisfaction that they actually feel grown up. (K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)

The use of PowerPoint presentations to disseminate their findings was found by some children to be a more accessible alternative. The class teacher at Tower identified two reasons for this:

[...] in the end, for some of them, [a written report] became the focus. "I have to produce my final copy," rather than, "Oh look, I have done all this research and I found this and I have found that out." [...] You know, PowerPoint has a huge role in this. [...] Everything was visual and they could talk through it. And I think that is more essential than being able to produce reams of paper. I think that even a child with special needs [...] would present an equally powerful presentation as a gifted and talented child that could write a [long] report explaining everything they have done. [...] They have both travelled the same journey. And they achieved the same thing and I think if you rely on reports, you would miss that both these children have an equally valid case to put forward.
(S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

As the facilitator at Bridge suggested, considering alternative ways for the children to disseminate their research findings is likely to be helpful:

I think the best way would be to have lots of options and [...] to suggest other ways of presenting so that can become an area of choice.
(K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)

Indeed, at Pagoda, the children worked with their external facilitator to find an alternative which reflected the broad 'creativity in the curriculum' theme of the children's research:

[...] mostly it was about what the children felt about the process and about [...] the results they'd got, the children's own feeling about it and how they wanted to express that, and [...] they chose words, music and dance. [...] There was a lot of building something new from what we'd done, not just from the results of what we'd done but from the process, where it had brought us. (D, Facilitator, External organisation, Pagoda)

This was not felt to diminish, in anyway, the value of the children's output:

It was very childlike, not childish. (L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

It is not clear from the data how receptive schools might be to this, particularly where they are clear expectations of what the product of a child's engagement in research process

should be. At Archway, for example, where the purpose of the project was provision for their more able pupils, it was clear that a written report was an expected outcome.

I don't know exactly what [teacher/facilitator] is going to say to them but I hope [...] it is going to be made clear to them that if they start it they have to see it through to the end and they'll be expected to produce a [...] research paper by the end of it. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

These children went on to produce both written reports and PowerPoint presentations.

These seemed to be viewed as a vehicle for providing evidence of academic achievement rather than tools for the dissemination of research findings:

I thought this year some of them were very good but some of them weren't up to the standard that you would expect. [...] I thought there was a kind of gap between what they did, what they'd actually produced and what you expected them to produce. (T, Class teacher, Archway)

The school's headteacher had similar concerns.

*Disappointed with quality of presentations and content of reports
Acknowledged process is important but product is what is on show
to others and how work and school will be judged
Children need to do this bit really well – they were 'really bright kids' – so should have been able to do this much better
(O, Headteacher, Archway, Interview notes)*

Here, judgements about outcomes seemed to be based only on the quality of the children's tangible output. The findings of their research and the opportunity dissemination provided for children's views to be expressed appeared to be of little significance. Perhaps this was to be expected when the school had taken up the initiative solely as provision for more able pupils:

*[...] it still needs to still keep up the kind of academic element to it
[...] because that is the purpose isn't it, really? (T, Class teacher, Archway)*

Some children at Archway had expressed disappointment at the lack of interest in their research findings. They could see that opportunities for disseminating their work were important:

I would have thought that there wasn't really any point in doing it 'cause it was just going to kind of sit in my computer forever, and not, nothing would be done with it. (YR, Archway)

However, they also saw the need for an audience that was, at least, interested:

*- [...] the crowd looked bored and I gave my report out to [teaching staff] but nobody seemed much bothered about it.
- It would have been much better if people took more notice of it because nobody actually afterwards said anything much, I remember one teacher said, "That was good", but there was nothing else, nobody else.
(YRs, Archway)*

In contrast, at Bridge, where the purpose of the CaR initiative was rather different and there were more authentic opportunities for dissemination and at Pagoda, where the school had been involved and interested in the process throughout, the children's experiences were more positive in this respect:

*It was a really good experience and it was really nice to see lots of people watching what you were doing [...] but then there were people asking you questions and that was quite hard. But it was a really good experience and you felt really independent.
(YR, Bridge) (Talking about dissemination at a conference)*

When you did research before [we did this course] you were finding out things that the teachers already knew because they wanted you to find out as well but the research we do now, [...] we actually tell the teachers what we have found out and they might not know that already 'cause we found it out and we are telling them and it feels different. (YR, Pagoda)

Like the children at Archway, some children at Rotunda and Tower produced both written reports and PowerPoint presentations but there seems to have been an element of choice about this. In these two schools, teachers' understandings of the purpose of dissemination, and hence their expectations and judgements, were rather different:

If you have got to explain to a group of your peers, to a group of other children involved [...] you actually get a greater understanding of what you have achieved. [...] They are very proud of their written reports [...] but I think they have got a lot more from presenting.

(S, Class teacher/Facilitator, Tower)

At the end of this I want these children to feel they have been able to offer something new to other people and they want to have the opportunity of standing up and disseminating that information, them feeling empowered. (R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

I think the kind of standard of stuff you got last year was not particularly high but I think the process of doing it was where the children learnt. And I think we can lose sight of that in the academic world, looking at the product and polishing it [...] and grading it, whether or not it fulfils the criteria, whereas this stuff was not marked, it was not assessed in that way. All the children's work went into one booklet, even the worst of it. No one was to say, "Well, no, it's not good enough".

(E, Facilitator, Independent, Rotunda)

The teacher at Rotunda also acknowledged the need, where appropriate, to disseminate to an audience who were in a position to effect change:

[...] one of my concerns would be that it would become a piece of work that you do but no-one really listens to you or you might share it with the class next door and then it goes back in your tray as put away for ever. [...] I think we have a responsibility to make sure whatever they do, the right people get fed back to, the work gets sent on, they actually do disseminate the information to the right people.

(R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

Thus, the difference in approach between Archway and Rotunda was marked. Though the children in both these schools investigated topics of personal interest, the expected outcomes reflected the purposes for the schools' involvement with the initiative.

At Bridge and at Pagoda, the research groups had clearly identified purposes for their research, framed by external organisations. Audiences for their findings were already assured. Moreover, because their curriculum-based projects had been wholeheartedly supported by their schools, they had potentially interested and influential internal

audiences. Therefore, the potential impact of the children's research also became a consideration:

Otherwise it would only be beneficial to us but now maybe people will think about what we have said, maybe of their own accord, maybe do something about it. Other wise if we didn't share it, it would be just us knowing and it would only really be for our benefit but now hopefully it will be for other people's as well. (YR, Bridge)

One of the things we made sure we did was the children got a chance to disseminate [...] it was a kind of event where staff were invited and the headteacher was there. [...] And he wanted to do that. And he saw their work in terms of almost a policy document, that this was something that was going to inform, they tended to see it as important information.

(K, Facilitator, CRC, Bridge)

This project was welcomed because it added to that, that gravitas, if you like, that credibility that children would have on the school council. Um, so that was one very, very big outcome for us. Um, if they speak, we will listen, was a message we were both agreeing with I think. [...] Now they've got to widen the sphere of influence, they've got to involve the school council now because they were only the research group and it's the school council that are the power brokers if you like. (L, Headteacher, Pagoda)

It seems reasonable to suggest that it might be more difficult for authentic and interested audiences to be found when children choose to investigate more personal topics. However, there is some evidence to suggest that opportunities can be found if adults are willing to give this sufficient thought:

[...] this year, we will probably send [reports] to more people, to a wider range of people. The recycling one that is in my head at the moment, that has to go to the borough [...] because it has a real audience.

(R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

The incentive to do this, however, seemed to be dependent on the motivations of the adults involved:

I think this is very important academically, intellectually and emotionally. [...] I've done this for two years and I think it has enormous value for the children, for educating and for learning about themselves and for schools and for children to have a voice. I think it is very, very, powerful. I don't think it is the be all and end

all. I think it is a part of their education; it's not part of it enough yet. Not anywhere near enough.

(R, Class teacher/facilitator, Rotunda)

4.5.11.1 Summary

Interpretations of the interview data suggest that where authentic opportunities were sought and offered as at Bridge, Pagoda and Rotunda, dissemination became a positive part of the children's research experiences and one that was necessary if the children's research was to have an impact on others. Such benefits seemed less likely to be conferred on the young researchers at Archway where the production of a final report was considered to be the target of their engagement in these initiatives and where research process was valued only as an academic exercise. Being able to choose alternative ways in which to disseminate their research findings was appreciated by young researchers and seen as necessary by adults at the other schools. It seems that, for some children, the need to produce a written report would present a barrier to their engagement in research process.

4.5.12 Summary of findings from the interviews

The issues which emerge from the interview and focus group data are numerous and wide-ranging. It is clear that these findings corroborate those from the participatory activities and the questionnaires and help to elucidate the children's responses which were presented in the earlier parts of this chapter. To list them all here would be unwieldy. Instead, they are incorporated into the final model which is presented below. The legend which accompanies the model clarifies which of its elements have arisen from or have been corroborated by interpretations of the interview data.

4.6 A final model

The presentation and interpretation of the study's findings presented in this chapter have contributed, stage by stage, to the construction of a model of the factors and processes impacting on children as researchers in the five English primary schools included in this study. The model in its final form (Figure 4.19) is based on the interim model shown as Figure 4.17 (page 201) which, in turn, was based on the preliminary model shown as Figure 4.8 (page 176). Amendments and augmentations have again been made. Here, these have been informed by the findings from the interviews.

The accompanying legend explains how these have been incorporated. Those factors and processes identified through analysis of the interview data only (*adult support, adult-child relationships, curriculum, feedback, dialogue and communication*) have been added and are shown in green. Of these, *dialogue* and *communication* are placed centrally since the findings suggest that these are heavily influenced by the exercise of power and are key factors in the children's and adults' experiences of the CaR initiatives.

The remaining factors and processes displayed in this final model have been identified through analysis of either two, or, more often, all three of the sets of data generated by this study. These are now shown in emboldened dark blue text. The findings suggest that, in this study, *voice* has most often been invoked through the children having (or not having) the opportunity for *choice*. The model has been modified to show this. It has also become clear that *motivation* and *purpose* need to be displayed in more than one sector of the model since they, like *time*, are implicated in more than one set of relationships between the central themes.

These relationships between the central themes, previously shown by broken or dashed lines, are now shown by solid lines since these have been confirmed by analysis of the interview data. Further arrowheads have been added where analysis of the interview data suggests that the relationships between central themes are two- rather than one-way. An

outer circle has also been added so show how the factors, processes and relationships shown in the model could be placed ostensibly into three categories, namely *rights based issues*, *operational issues* and *skills based issues*.

The final model is a representation of the findings of this study which have emerged from the data in its entirety. As such, it has been drawn upon to inform the discussion which follows in Chapter 5. It should be noted, however, that although the three categories identified above would seem to provide a good basis for this discussion, they are not used in this way since they have been imposed by the researcher rather than being identified by the participants. It is especially significant, for example, that although there are issues which are clearly rights based, the children in this study did not appear to perceive them to be so. The discussion is, instead, organised in the form of a response to the three research questions underpinning this study.

Finally, although the final amendments and augmentations to the model have been made as a result of the analysis of a large amount of interview data, elements identified only through the analysis of this set of data will need to be substantiated through further research. The model, therefore, is not currently as robust as it needs to be. It does, however, provide a good basis for the further study of CaR initiatives which will, hopefully, strengthen its validity. This, too, is discussed in the Chapter 5.

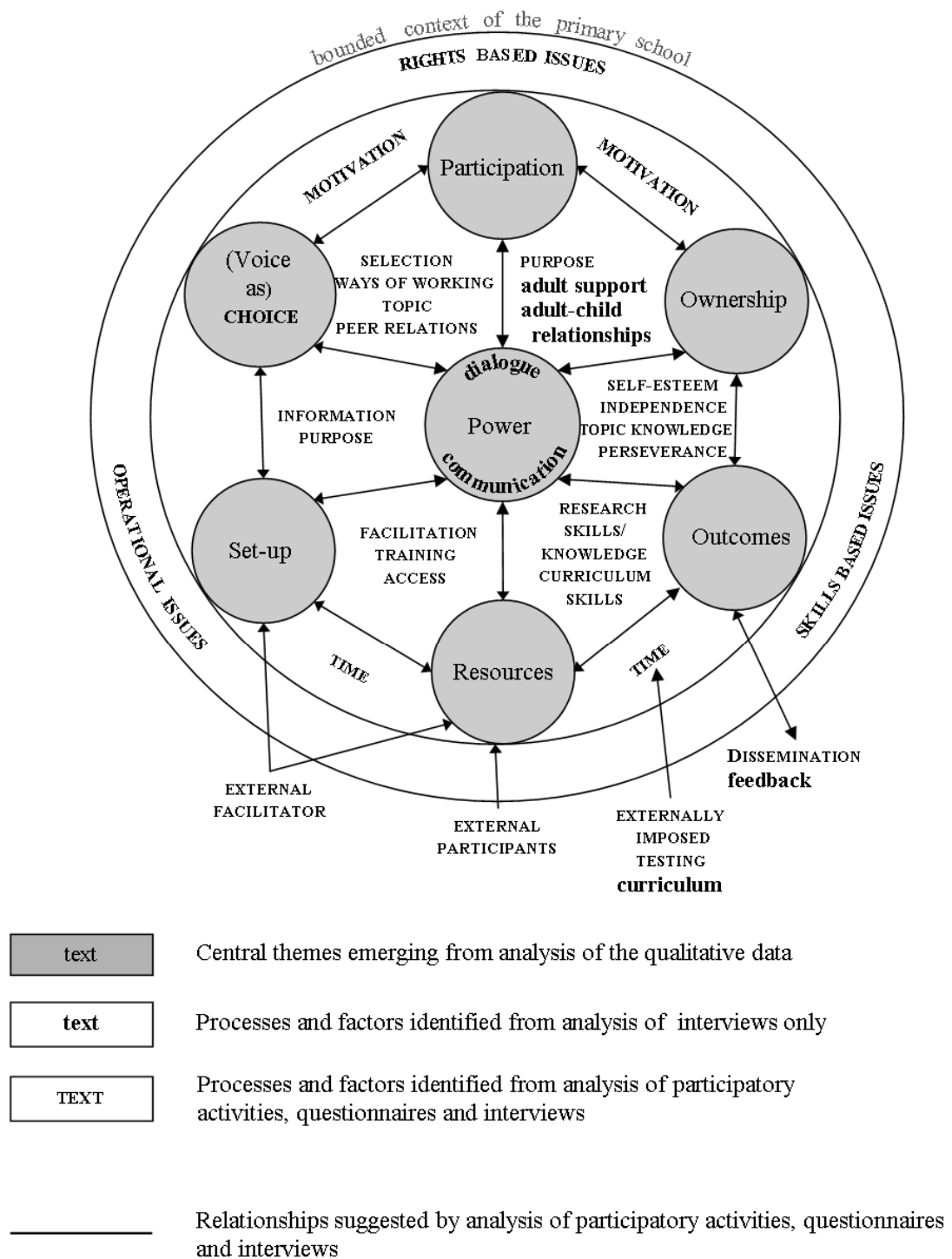


FIGURE 4.19 A final model of factors impacting on children as researchers in primary schools

5. DISCUSSION

“What is the use of repeating all that stuff?” the Mock Turtle interrupted, “if you don’t explain it as you go on? It’s by far the most confusing thing I ever heard!”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of children and adults who were directly or indirectly involved in CaR initiatives in five English primary schools. This exploration was guided by three research questions. The first, and most central, of these was *What aspects of English primary school environments create barriers to children’s active engagement in research process?*. Preceded by a fictitious ‘ideal’ scenario for CaR initiatives, the discussion which forms this penultimate chapter begins by considering answers to this question which have been offered by the findings of the study, setting these in the context of the debates explored in the earlier Literature Review (Chapter 2). Answers to the two subsidiary research questions, *How do children’s perceptions of adult-child relationships affect their training and activities as active researchers?* and *What do children perceive to be the outcomes of carrying out their own research projects?* are then similarly considered. The complex and interrelated nature of the study’s findings, demonstrated by the final model of factors and processes which impact on CaRs in English primary schools presented at the end of Chapter 4, is thus substantiated. This model is then referred to in order to clarify the theoretical contribution made by the study. Next, the study’s methodological contribution is considered before directions for future research are identified. A critique of the study concludes this chapter. The final chapter of the thesis attends to the implications of the study and recommendations for practice and policy.

5.1.1 The ideal scenario (with thanks – and apologies - to Lewis Carroll)

Alice, the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle are engaged in conversation about their schooling.

The Mock Turtle went on.

“We had the best of educations – in fact we went to school every day _”

“I’ve been to a day-school, too,” said Alice. “You needn’t be so proud as all that.”

“With extras?” asked the Mock Turtle, a little anxiously.

“Yes,” said Alice, “we could find out whatever was important to us, not just the things our masters had to teach us.”

“And washing?” said the Mock Turtle.

“Certainly not!” said Alice indignantly.

“Ah! Then yours wasn’t a really good school,” said the Mock Turtle in a tone of great relief. “Now, at *ours*, they had at the end of the bill, ‘French, music, *and washing* – extra.”

“It *was* a good school,” retorted Alice, and she went on with her account, for she was feeling very glad she had someone to listen to her.

“A visitor came to our school and told our schoolmasters all about children being able to find out things they wanted to find out about and not just about the things we learned at school so that grown-ups could learn about them, too.”

“When we went to school,” said the Mock Turtle, “the master was an old turtle - we used to call him Tortoise.”

“Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn’t one?” Alice asked.

“We called him Tortoise because he taught us,” said the Mock Turtle angrily. “Really, you are very dull!”

“I am not,” replied Alice. “My schoolfriends and I all found out lots of things our schoolmasters didn’t know.”

“It sounds like hard work,” said the Gryphon, his eyes already closing.

“We had help from the schoolmasters if we wanted it,” said Alice, “and we could work with our friends, too.”

Alice could see that this might sound like a queer thing to happen and, indeed, she had overheard one of her schoolmasters talking to her father, saying that it had sounded like an excellent plan but that when they had first heard of it they had had no idea how to set about it. Alice told the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon that someone who knew all about children finding things out had then come to her school and talked to everyone. He told them about all they would need to do and about being able to choose what to find out and how to go about it. And he told them that the children’s schoolmasters would be shown what to teach them and how to help them just in case the children decided they wanted help.

“I shouldn’t have wanted to do it,” said the Mock Turtle.

“We could choose to do it or not, although there were rather too many of us so we put our names in a hat and picked some out,” said Alice.

“And how did you find out all these things your masters didn’t know?” asked the Mock Turtle, sounding rather sceptical for he had not considered before that there might be such things.

“We were given all the things we needed to help us find out,” replied Alice.

“I cannot see how you would have had time, what with Reeling, Writhing and Arithmetic,” said the Mock Turtle.

“We were given time,” Alice said, “because our masters knew it was important. And they understood that some of our finding out work would help us with our other work.”

“Then you had children learning different things in the classroom at the same time,” said the Mock Turtle, thinking of all the difficulties there might be and thinking that Alice must be making all this up for it did indeed sound such a queer thing. “We had a particular place to go to,” said Alice, determined that the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon should understand how special it had all been. “And then what happened?” asked the Mock Turtle. “We told our masters what we had found out and they found other grown-ups for us to talk to, too, and they promised to go away and think about what we had said.” “Well, it all sounds extraordinary to me,” said the Mock Turtle, unconvinced. “That’s enough about lessons,” the Gryphon interrupted in very decided tone.

Although simplistic, this ideal scenario presents a picture of what CaR initiatives might look like for the children and adults involved in them. The scene is, perhaps, one which Alice might have encountered in her ‘wonderland’; it would indeed be a place full of wonderful things. Wonder, of course, can also be a feeling of surprise caused by something unfamiliar and the findings of this study indicate that the young researchers in the five schools involved in this study might be surprised by Alice’s story of her ‘ideal’ experience. This study was prompted by wonder, in this sense a desire to know, about young researchers’ experiences. If CaR initiatives are to embrace all those elements which the children in this study have identified as being important, then adults really do need to listen.

5.2 What aspects of English primary school environments create barriers to children’s active engagement in research process?

Interrogation of the data has suggested that answers to this question must take into account not only those barriers which have a direct impact on children’s *engagement* (commitment to and sustained interest) in research process but also those which might be described more accurately as barriers to children’s *participation* (inclusion) in CaR initiatives since these are clearly interdependent. Consequently, distinctions between them are sometimes blurred. Nonetheless, barriers to children’s participation in the initiatives are considered first: these include the ways in which young researchers are selected; inadequate information; the external constraints to which English primary schools are subject, and organisational constraints. The focus then turns to barriers to children’s engagement in

research process which highlight the importance of children being allowed to make choices about their research topics and about how they work.

5.2.1 Barriers to children's participation

5.2.1.1 The selection of young researchers

Hart (1992), Sinclair (2002) and Hartas (2008) argue that children need to be able to choose to participate or not, a choice which should be both informed and respected. The findings of this study identify the selection of young researchers as problematic since, as shown in Figure 5.1, for the children in this study, choice about their selection was not always offered. Consequently, some children who wanted to participate as young researchers could not (as at Archway, Bridge, Pagoda and Tower) and those who did participate in this way had not always chosen to (again, at Archway, Pagoda and Tower and also at Rotunda).

		SELECTION PROCESS	
		By children	By adults
CHOICE	Yes	Children choose to volunteer and all who volunteer are selected <i>or</i> children choose who participates from amongst their peers who have freely volunteered. (No examples in this study)	Children choose to volunteer but adults select who can take part from amongst the volunteers. Children can opt out later even if selected. (e.g., Bridge)
	No	Children are selected by their peers and are not given the opportunity to opt out. (No examples in this study)	Children are selected by adults and are not given the opportunity to opt out. (e.g., Archway, Pagoda, Rotunda, Tower)

FIGURE 5.1 The interplay between choice and the selection of young researchers

At Rotunda, for example, because the whole class was involved in the CaR initiative, the children inevitably had no choice at all about participating. It is apposite here to reiterate Lansdown's assertion (2001) that children are under no obligation to participate; this is a particularly difficult issue if activities which fall under the umbrella of children's

participation, of which children as researchers is one, take place in curriculum time. Notably, the children at Rotunda did not perceive this as an issue but it is worth considering here that choice is not something which pupils usually experience in their day to day schooling. As one teacher confirmed, *it's a difficult thing to get hold of because you have someone saying to them, "Well, you have a choice," and then they go [...], "This is not what we usually do in class* (see also Alderson, 2000a; Lynch and Lodge, 2002).

Nevertheless, where only some children were selected to participate, issues relating to fairness and equality of opportunity appeared to be significant. Although the experiences of the young researchers who were selected without being consulted were subsequently largely positive, they did feel strongly that they should have been given a choice about being members of the research groups, a choice which their peers felt they, too, should have been offered. In some cases, this did not mean that the children necessarily wanted to take part: it was being offered a choice that was crucial. This was especially so when the children who were selected were seen by their peers to be those who Thomas and Crowley describe as 'the usual suspects' (2006:177). As one of the children said, *they always pick the same old people over and over* (see also, for example, Howe and Covell, 2005; Davies *et al*, 2006; Tisdall *et al*, 2008).

Cox and Robinson-Pant (2005) suggest that pupils recognise the qualities which are seen as desirable and understand why they might or might not be chosen but this did not always seem to be the case. While young researchers at Pagoda and Tower identified poor behaviour as a likely bar to selection, other children expressed puzzlement about selection criteria, not only in the context of the CaR initiative but also in school more generally, talking, for example, about being *ignored* and *never getting noticed* despite being *good*, *working hard* and *trying their best*. Some teachers admitted that this was something not usually discussed with the children. When it was clear to the children that being *clever* was the selection criterion applied to membership of the research group, this did not necessarily

mean that they were more accepting of it, sometimes seeing this as evidence of adults perceiving them to be lacking in ability: *Didn't you only pick clever people? Are you saying I'm not clever?* responded one child.

The initiative undoubtedly offers more able children particular opportunities to extend their knowledge, skills and critical thinking (Kellett *et al*, 2004; Kellett, 2005a). However, if lack of ability can be a barrier to some children's participation in the context of CaR initiatives, questions need to be asked about whether or not ability is always an appropriate criterion for selection, especially if Kellett's vision for CaR initiatives has at its core the empowerment of children (2005a) and the 'promotion of children's democratic involvement at all stages of decision making' (forthcoming). This study has shown that where young researchers were not selected on the basis of ability, teaching staff and others have been surprised by the ways in which the young researchers have developed and displayed their competencies, both academically and personally. At Rotunda, for example, an external advisor exclaimed, *by god, you can see what the kids have got out of the process*. Further evidence shows that it is not necessary for young researchers to be academically more able: both the Children's Research Centre and Young Researchers' Network websites include research projects carried out by children and young people with learning difficulties (see also Kellett, 2008b).

Thus, exclusionary practices on the part of adults in school, as well as their expectations and preconceptions about pupils' abilities, act as a barrier to some children's participation, as clarified in Figure 5.2. It is notable that children perceived that these barriers were in place even in schools where the initiative was not seen as provision for more able pupils. As Pearl (1997) argues, the attribution of deficits can be a major contributing factor in deciding who is entitled to participate. At Archway, for example, children deemed to have cultural capital by virtue of being on the G&T register were also seen to be entitled to participate; others who were not on the G&T register, by implication, were attributed

with deficits. In this context, the decision made at Rotunda to engage whole classes in the initiatives were encouraging, especially as many of the children, who were described by their teacher as having significant social and academic difficulties, could be seen as lacking the cultural capital which Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) consider important to school success. Thus, for some schools and teachers, considerations of equality of opportunity were more important than offering children a choice, whereas, for others, offering enhanced provision for the most able children overrode both of these considerations.

		CULTURAL CAPITAL	
		Yes	No
PARTICIPATION	Yes	'The same old people' (e.g., young researchers at Archway, Pagoda and Tower)	The whole class (e.g., at Rotunda)
	No	Children allowed to opt out (e.g., peers of young researchers at Bridge)	Children do not fulfil the criteria (e.g., peers of young researchers at Archway, Pagoda and Tower)

FIGURE 5.2 The interplay between adults' perceptions of children's cultural capital and their entitlement to participate

For the children, however, the overriding issue was that they wanted to be given a choice about whether or not they participated. Being given a choice was more important than actually participating. At Bridge, for example, the opportunity to volunteer to participate in the CaR initiative was appreciated even when this did not result in being selected: *I did sign up but I didn't get in but I did have a choice*. In other schools, children, unlike their teachers, assumed that everyone should be entitled to participate if they want to and also that they should be entitled to refuse. As two of the children explained, *you should be able to have a chance to do it even if you say no and if they wanted to, yes, but it's their decision*. However, as an external facilitator at Archway acknowledged, *it is difficult for a*

child to say 'no' to a teacher in school and this study did not find any evidence of children withdrawing at the selection stage.

Of course, when it is feasible to have only a small group of young researchers (for example, when an external facilitator is involved) the initiatives cannot provide an equal opportunity for all pupils. This is a difficult situation and not one which seems easy to solve, possible solutions being reliant on resources, especially in terms of adult support within schools and on a school's purpose for engaging in the programme. Certainly, many of the children and some adults in this study suggested ways of selecting members of the groups that were felt to be more egalitarian (for example, *picking names out of a hat*, especially if this was preceded by volunteering) and the selection of more able pupils to become researchers was seen by one teacher at Rotunda to perpetuate an elitist view of research: *there is an elitism when you're talking about children as researchers that's stopping [all children participating] which is just pulling out the right kids and giving them something exciting to do?[...] There is an elitism about research isn't there?*

Despite this argument, this study corroborates Stafford *et al's* (2003) findings that not all children want to participate when offered opportunities. For example, being selected as a member of the group was sometimes problematic. Some children at Archway, selected on the basis of their high ability, did not want to be associated so explicitly with this cohort especially when it became clear that being seen by their peers as clever was not always a positive thing. As one of their peers confirmed, *people might think you were like, a bit like, a nerd, like you were turning into a nerd*. This itself was a barrier to some children's participation, playing a part for example, in the decision of two young researchers at this school to drop out of the initiative.

Further reasons for not wanting to participate in the CaR initiatives were provided by children who responded negatively to a questionnaire item asking if they would have liked to have been involved. It is not clear from subsequent explanations such as *because I don't*

really want everybody to know about my life or because if I was involved I would have to give stuff about myself whether the children did not want to respond, as the young researchers' participants, to questions about their own lives or if, as researchers, they would not have wanted to identify personal research topics. Nevertheless, this does suggest that, for some children, privacy is important. They want to be able to exercise some choice about participating, choosing, perhaps, not to be 'involved' at all. In other words, as discussed above, children regard an entitlement to decline to participate as important as an entitlement to participate.

Some children, though, seemed happy to be 'involved' at the level of being one of the children's participants, considering this as a positive contribution to the research projects. From this perspective, 'involvement' in research projects blurs adult delineations of what participation involves (Morrow, 1999; Shier, 2001). The distinction Boyden and Ennew make between participation as 'taking part in' and as 'knowing one's actions are taken note of and may be acted upon' (1997:33) is not so clear when it is applied to acting as a participant in a research project since both these conditions are met in so far as 'actions' become data and might influence the impact the project might have.

The discussion in this section has focused on how selection criteria for CaR initiatives can act as a barrier to some children's participation. It has also drawn attention to the need for children to have a choice about participating. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that it is difficult for children and adults to make decisions about children's participation in CaR initiatives if they do not have access to the information on which informed decisions could be made. Inadequate information has thus also been identified by this study as a barrier to the children's participation and this is discussed in the following section.

5.2.1.2 Inadequate information

Packwood and Turner (2000) propose that limiting access to information, whether deliberate or not, becomes a source of power. This proposition is endorsed by the findings of this study where it became clear from the interviews that both children's and adults' abilities to act were restricted by lack of information.

Prior information about the CaR initiative and what was involved was given to the children in only one school, Bridge. Here, after a visit from the external facilitator, when she talked to the children about what was involved, the children who then wanted to participate volunteered to do so. Hence their decision was informed. In contrast, at Archway, children were not given any information about the project before it started and this lack of such information prompted some negative reactions to being selected. As two young researchers explained: *they thought it was just going to be about how you do research and didn't actually know [they] were going to do [their] own projects*. Lack of information was also problematic for some teachers. At Pagoda, for example, one teacher confirmed that the staff at the school knew only as much as the children *which was [they] were going out to [city] to learn about research*.

However, although selecting children to participate in an activity without their informed consent might be considered ethically dubious, especially since both children and teachers have attested to the workload the CaR initiatives involve for the children, it does not seem to be the case that information was deliberately withheld. For example, the time constraints imposed by the external agency working with Pagoda gave the school little time in which to organise a group. These findings show that when schools are considering whether to engage in initiatives such as CaR, a conscious effort should be made to impart relevant information to both children and school staff before the initiative is introduced.

For any CaR initiative, it is clear that both children and teachers need to be fully informed in advance. The data show that this was felt to be particularly important for schools

working with external facilitators. In these schools, teachers felt unable to support their pupils effectively between facilitator visits because they did not know enough about what was expected. At Archway, for example, a teacher commented *that was kind of one of the major frustrations that we didn't really know what they were doing*. In contrast, a teacher at Tower commented that the external facilitator had *filled [her] in constantly with what was going on*. This allowed her to appreciate the feeling of being part of a team as well as helping her to support the young researchers in her class: *it was like, OK, I know where they are and then I know where I need to take them [...] because I actually had something to do with them [...]*. It is not just that a paucity of information can be a barrier to the children's participation in the initiatives: if a CaR initiative is being implemented, then the whole school needs to know, particularly the teachers of the pupils involved. Thus, lack of information is likely to have influenced how *involved* the school as a whole felt. As discussed later, this is important since it is implicated in issues such as the value accorded to the initiatives by the schools involved and the levels of resourcing they are willing to make available.

Although it relates more specifically to barriers to children's engagement with research process rather than their participation in the initiatives *per se*, it is apposite to point out that young researchers felt that when they worked with external facilitators, their teachers did not understand what was involved. Thus, the children themselves were aware that their teachers had not been fully informed about the likely workload, research process or arrangements for data collection which needed to be facilitated. This was a cause of some indignation when the additional workload involved meant that children missed other lessons that they particularly enjoyed, e.g., sport or music, but which their teachers felt *weren't very important*. Conversely, some of the young researchers' peers felt resentful because young researchers were being taken out of lessons, or even out of school, to work on their research projects, something that was seen as a privilege. Both these situations

again highlight the need for information and discussion at an early stage. External facilitators needed to make it clear to schools and especially to the young researcher's teachers exactly what the children are taking on, and teachers needed to discuss with all the children the additional work required of young researchers. Had this happened, it might have avoided the initiatives being perceived as a *treat* by other children.

These findings suggest that, at worst, some schools did not think it necessary to give children information (or choices) about the initiative or, at best, little attention was paid to developing good communication and information channels between external facilitators and school staff. This reveals a deeper problem. There is little evidence from this study that school staff (and in some cases, external facilitators) felt it was important to impart to the children the information needed for the children to make informed decisions about their participation. The study raises questions, therefore, about the attention paid in English primary schools to children's rights. Since the UNCRC is widely cited as having been particularly influential in driving forward increases in children's 'voice' and participation initiatives such as those involving young researchers, it seems pertinent to draw attention here to Article 13 which states explicitly that children's right to freedom of expression includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information. The right to make informed choices is implicit here. If, as Kellett (forthcoming) hopes, CaR initiatives are to promote children's democratic involvement at all stages of decision making, then access to and sharing of knowledge and information are clearly of paramount importance. This is one of the conditions needed for facilitating the conditions of democratic practice (see, for example, Young, 2000 and Osler and Starkey, 2006). (Others particularly apposite to the findings of this study are inclusion and equality of opportunities.) As Power *et al* (2001) and Johnson (2004), for example, conclude, establishing such conditions is likely to pose a considerable challenge to schools. The schools involved in this study are clearly at an early stage in rising to this challenge in spite of their involvement in CaR initiatives. This

suggests that primary schools need to have explicit mechanisms in place for information and knowledge sharing when they introduce new initiatives that they wish children and staff to invest in.

5.2.1.3 External constraints

Notions of democracy in schools have frequently been identified as a cause of widespread anxiety amongst teachers (Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004a). This has been attributed to perceptions on the part of teachers that this is yet another threat to personal autonomy imposed by the plethora of curriculum initiatives and national strategies that have been introduced during recent years (Scott, 2002). While there was little evidence from this study to support this view, in all schools in this study, the demands made on teachers by the National Curriculum and externally imposed testing were seen to pose barriers to children's participation in the CaR initiatives in more pragmatic ways. Rudduck and Fielding (2006) have identified time and the pressures of the curriculum as having a negative impact on the creation of metaphorical spaces where not only pupils but also their teachers can engage in democratic practices such as young researcher initiatives. The barriers imposed by external testing are discussed further in the following section.

When considering barriers to children's participation in this context it is essential to consider the ways in which their teachers might also be prevented from participating as this study has shown that this has significant impact on the children's experiences. This impact was particularly evident when children were withdrawn from class to work with facilitators during lesson time and was a cause of regret for some teachers. Although, as the external facilitator working at Pagoda explained, external facilitators were valued *as a crucial part of the success of the project* because CaR initiatives *could just be seen as another project that [teachers] don't have time for*, this led to concern on the part of some teachers that the children's research was unrelated to what went on in the classroom. This was deemed to

have an impact on teachers' own level of involvement and was exacerbated by a lack of information, as discussed above.

The demands of the curriculum posed difficulties even where teachers acted as the children's facilitators and where research training and process was integrated into curriculum time, as at Rotunda. This led some teachers to propose that 'blocking' the work into a shorter period of time along with some foundation subjects (those that were not the subject of the SATs) might be preferable. In other schools, the children's work seems to have invariably taken longer than originally envisaged and adults both internal and external to the schools have suggested that CaR programmes would be better *short and fat* rather than *long and thin*. Many of the children also were critical of the latter approach and thought that *it goes on for too long*.

However, implementing CaR initiatives in this way would almost certainly make it more difficult for adults who are external to the school to facilitate the children's research. More frequent visits to a school would, for example, involve a considerable amount of travel within a short space of time, especially if the school was not local to the university. Such an arrangement is unlikely to be feasible where facilitators are working in more than one school concurrently. This also has implications for funding the initiatives. While funding was not identified as an issue during this study since, in all schools where the children worked with external facilitators, this was provided by either by the CRC or other external agencies, this does need to be borne in mind as a potential barrier to schools' and children's participation in future initiatives. This perhaps points to schools taking on the responsibility for running CaR initiatives without heavy reliance on external facilitators as a possible way forward. However, other internally imposed restraints were also identified as posing barriers to the children's participation and these are discussed in the following section.

5.2.1.4 Organisational restraints

In addition to difficulties with balancing the demands of the curriculum and identifying blocks of time for children to carry out their research experienced by some schools, it was apparent that finding physical space was also problematic. In this section, the main focus is on how lack of physical spaces in school for children to pursue their research was revealed as an additional barrier. In his discussion of student voice projects in secondary schools, Fielding identifies space as one of nine ‘interrogative sites’ which are essential if enterprises that are intended to be empowering, such as CaR initiatives (Kellett, 2005a), are to be successful. He asks, ‘Where are the public spaces [...] in which these encounters might take place?’, ‘Who controls them?’, and ‘What values shape their being and their use?’ (2001a:110).

With the first of these in mind, this study revealed that finding space in which to work with the children frequently caused tensions, especially when the work took place in curriculum time. This was not, of course, peculiar to the CaR initiatives and teachers at more than one school confirmed that space was always at a premium. Working in any spaces that could be found seems to have been part and parcel of facilitating the initiatives. This sometimes presented difficulties, particularly when lack of space restricted the activities which could be carried out or when adults and children had to move from space to space within a session. Noise, too, presented some problems and interfered with training or discussion. The children considered that noise and lack of dedicated space had an adverse impact on their own data collection and that these factors restricted opportunities for the participation of their peers, particularly during interviews which required not only quiet but also, and perhaps more importantly, privacy.

While it is understandable that such problems will arise when space is limited, some young researchers saw the failure of schools to allocate a designated space as less than respectful, pointing out that if other extra-curricula activities had their own space then so should the

‘research clubs’. The impression that these children formed regarding their school’s attitude towards their research is related not only to Fielding’s (2001a) question about who controls space in school, but also to his question about the values which are placed on voice initiatives such as CaR programmes. The findings from this study revealed a rather mixed picture. At Pagoda, for example, the children’s training took place at venues external to the school. For the children, this gave a clear signal that their research was being taken seriously and that it was regarded as important. It was notable that, at the same school, the children and their external facilitator also had a dedicated space in which to work. Again, this suggests that in this school children were receiving the message that their research activities were valued. In other schools, when rooms had been requested (and promised) in advance it appears to have been not unusual for adults to find that these spaces were not, in fact, available. This kind of experience sends out a message to young researchers that their activities are not particularly significant as these have to compete for space with other planned activities. However, it cannot be assumed that this was inevitably due to a lack of value being accorded to the children’s activities. Often, mix-ups over space were due to lack of communication between members of the school staff. On the other hand, in some schools, it was evident that the children’s research was not perceived as a particularly high status activity: as one teacher at Archway explained, it was *just another thing to think about with so many things going on*.

As well as lack of access to space to carry out their research, children and facilitators often faced competition for other necessary resources. The external facilitator at Archway suggested that the organisation of access to computers also seemed to be a low priority. This and the technical problems to which the computers seemed prone were particular causes of frustration to the young researchers and facilitators across the schools in this study, even where the children’s teacher acted as facilitator. Again, experiences at Pagoda appeared unique in this study in that computers were always available for the children to

use when they needed them and one of the teachers in the school made sure any technical problems were rectified quickly.

As discussed above in relation to the demands of the curriculum, as well as space, lack of time was identified by many participants to have been a major issue. This is one issue that is not explicit in Fielding's 'interrogative sites' (2001a:110) although this study has revealed that it is a particularly salient consideration for schools involved in CaR initiatives. This was the case in all the schools involved in the study, including those where teachers introduced CaR initiatives with their whole classes. For the children, shortage of time was a significant concern. They felt that finding time to carry out their work as young researchers was an additional burden that weighed heavily on the responsibilities they already had in terms of other extra-curricular activities and, more often, homework. These concerns were not always recognised by their teachers. Talking about the children producing research reports of what she saw to be sufficient quality, the headteacher at Archway declared that the children *have time* to do this because *they're kids*. Yet, these children were in Year 6, the school year in England when children are required to sit external attainment tests (SATs) in English, Mathematics and Science. Taken in May, the tests themselves and revision for them (often, it seemed, given for homework) inevitably overlapped with the children's research work; the combined workload was felt by the children to be particularly onerous. At this school, the study revealed a significant mismatch between the views of the children and those of their teachers in relation to time.

As competition for time was particularly acute in Year 6, some teachers suggested that Year 5 would be a better year group with which to work. This seems worthy of serious consideration especially since the pilot initiative for the Children's Research Centre (Kellett, 2005b) was also carried out successfully with Year 5 children. In this study, the children who had been in Year 5 when they carried out their research did not identify time and workload to be such a problem.

5.2.2 Barriers to children's engagement

The discussion in this section relates more directly on identifying barriers to children's engagement in their own research. That is not to say that they are distinct from the issues discussed above, which relate to barriers to children's participation. Instead, the issues considered in the preceding section help set the context for the discussion which follows.

5.2.2.1 Choice of research topic

For the children in this study, being offered and being able to make decisions about particular aspects of their research were identified as important and appeared to have a direct impact on their views about the CaR initiatives in their schools. Although decisions about who was to be selected for the schools' research groups did not, in most cases, involve the children, the young researchers were able to make choices about their research topics. All of the children interviewed were unanimous in confirming this as a crucial motivational factor. A young researcher at Bridge explained, *if we are researching something that we want to know about, we are more enthusiastic and more likely to take it seriously and if we are not then it's just, like, what's the point?*

The motivating effect of freedom of choice of research topic was acknowledged not only by the children but also by most of the teachers and facilitators involved. However, detailed examination of the data revealed that whether or not the children's choices were respected was very much dependent on the perceived purpose of the CaR initiatives. For example, at Archway, where the CaR initiative was seen as provision for the more able, two young researchers dropped out of their school's research group partly because they were not allowed to pursue the topic of their choice. Not only did this action on the part of the school cause these children to lose motivation, it also revealed a mismatch between teachers' and children's views. The school did not consider the topic sufficiently weighty in academic terms. Since the topic was something that was important to the children, however, they felt that this embargo was disrespectful as it signalled to them that their

research questions were regarded as trivial. This example illustrates that restricting children's choice in this way not only acts as a barrier to their engagement in the research process, it also sends a clear message that the school is not really interested in listening to what children have to say about issues that concern them.

At the same school, one child's choice of bullying as a research topic was reported by his teacher as unacceptable to the school since it might have caused the child's potential participants to worry about something the school felt was not a problem. The same teacher talked of *research people won't like*, explaining that, *sometimes the children's agenda is different to [the headteacher's] agenda and by [the headteacher's] agenda I mean the school's agenda*. So, potentially, the children's choice of research topics can be seen as neither in children's 'best interests' (UNCRC, Article 3) nor in those of adults within their institution. Yet, as a result of the external facilitator's mediation on the child's behalf, the bullying topic was pursued: the child's research findings led to a change in the school's bullying policy. As Prout (2001) suggests, policy initiatives in schools would be more effective if children's active role in producing 'local realities' was acknowledged. While it should be noted that denying a child's right to pursue a topic of concern to them could be interpreted as a contravention of Article 12 of the UNCRC, it is perhaps more helpful here to consider the positive role that dialogue can play in addressing conflicts between adults' and children's priorities. In the case discussed above, the facilitator was able to negotiate with the school on the child's behalf. Such dialogue, suggests Hill (2005), would help to ensure that it is children's needs which are addressed and not those attributed to them by adults. This suggests that schools need to pay close attention to their reasons for wishing to engage with CaR initiatives and to understand that these might be in conflict with those of the children. The support of someone who can act as a neutral mediator on the children's behalf would be helpful in cases where the child's choice is not respected.

The findings from Archway provide a salutary example of what can go wrong when children and schools have different perceptions of the purpose for engaging in a CaR initiative. In other schools in this study, where the purpose was clearly understood as the empowerment of pupils in terms of pupil voice, no restrictions were placed on topics. At Rotunda and Tower, for example, the young researchers had a free choice. At Bridge and at Pagoda, general themes were imposed by external (funding) agencies but the children could identify any topic of personal interest within these themes. In all cases, the children's choices were valued no matter what they were. This is not to say that there were neither difficulties nor misgivings. As the external facilitator at Pagoda reported, during an investigation into teaching and learning issues, some young researchers were remonstrated with by one teacher for asking *a very personal question*, i.e., *How would it feel if you were being taught by you?*. Although Devine (2003), Fielding (2004b) and Bragg (2007c) report that pupils' active engagement in 'voice' projects is acceptable to teachers as long as their roles are not questioned, this was not a significant issue in this study. This may be because, unlike the 'voice' projects discussed by Devine, Fielding and Bragg, the children's choices of topic were not always restricted to teaching and learning issues. Arguably, when young researchers interrogate the latter issues, it is likely that this could be perceived as challenging teachers' knowledge, expertise and autonomy.

The emphasis on affording ownership to children of their own research agendas is a crucial feature of the vision for CaR initiatives (Kellett *et al*, 2004a). Findings from this study support the argument that when children identify and research significant issues which blur the boundary between their lives inside and outside school (what one young researcher at Archway referred to as *my own important stuff*) this can lead to increased understanding of children's experiences within school (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). It can also make a difference to the communities which children value (Wenger, 1998; Lansdown 2005). The teacher at Rotunda where the whole class had chosen their own research topics attested to

the impact this had had not only on the children's understandings of their life experiences but also on her understanding of the children in her class and on people in the local community. The findings from this study lend support to Hartas' proposition that 'research as a bottom-up activity has the potential to be transformative because it originates within young people's micro settings' (2008:167).

Where there were misgivings about the children's choices, it was only through discussion that adults came to realise why it was important for children to pursue their own agendas. This supports Hill's (2005) suggestion that dialogue is key, but it should be noted that the findings from this study have shown that this dialogue can only come about when adults are willing to enter into these discussions and to listen to what the children have to say. At Rotunda, where the young researchers chose to investigate sensitive topics (racism, murder and unhappy childhood experiences, for example), this prompted ethics-related talk and further discussions within the class that opened up hitherto *taboo* subjects and raised awareness within the class of others' different lives and concerns. It is admirable that the adults at Rotunda were willing to support this process. This is a good example of the kind of risk-taking of which MacBeath (2004) and McMahon and Portelli (2004) write which involves adults examining their assumptions about authority and institutional practices which have previously gone unchallenged. It also offers an example of how schools can facilitate democratic participation (John, 2003; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004a; Willow *et al*, 2004). At Rotunda, the children's choices of 'difficult' topics countered adults' perceptions of children's innocence and allowed adults and children to engage in the kind of genuine dialogue about issues which are important to children that is felt to be so important in developing children's socially aware citizenship (Howe and Covell, 2005). As Moosa-Mitha argues from the standpoint of her 'difference-centred' approach to children's citizenship, children's interests are 'publicly significant'(2005:377) yet, as Wyness *et al* (2004) claim, since these have not been taken seriously, children have been unable to

communicate effectively with wider society. CaR initiatives in schools, especially where these lead to effective dissemination opportunities, seem to have the potential to provide children with opportunities to do this.

In addition to offering opportunities to engage in genuine, intergenerational dialogue about important topics, as discussed above, this study established that being able to choose a research topic had significant motivational value as far as the children were concerned. This was because it permitted them to pursue topics that did not usually feature in the school curriculum and allowed them to be the ‘experts’. This was nicely illustrated by the young researcher at Pagoda who contrasted finding out *things that the teachers already knew [that] they wanted you to find out as well* with being able to *tell the teachers what we have found out because they might not know that already ‘cause we found it out and we are telling them and it feels different*. Adults also reported that they welcomed this as it was a cause of some regret for several teachers across the schools that the *very prescribed* nature of the curriculum limited the range of topics they were able to cover in the classroom. This was a particular problem when children were preparing for the SATs in Year 6. A teacher at Tower explained, *we are pushing, pushing, you know, “You’ve got to learn this, you have to do this, you have to revise that.”*

Although the majority of young researchers in this study identified choice of topic as crucial, it should be noted that some children reported that they found freedom of choice a difficult path to negotiate. As this problem was also mentioned by teachers at Rotunda and Tower, where, respectively, initiatives had been completed or were beginning with whole classes, it suggests that this factor needs to be taken into account when children with a wide range of abilities participate in CaR initiatives. It is clear that when adult facilitators work with children who find such choices difficult to make, they need to take care to carefully scaffold the process of identifying a research topic and then a specific research question so that the young researchers retain ownership of their project. As the findings of

this study suggest, unless this happens, freedom of choice can itself become a barrier to children's engagement in research process.

5.2.2.2 Choice of ways of working

In addition to being offered control over topic choice, even if this needed careful scaffolding at times, a further vital factor in enabling the children's engagement was the opportunity for them to decide for themselves how they wanted to work: individually, in a pair or in a small group. At Archway, where the CaR initiative was seen as provision for the more able children, independent working was expected and the school was reluctant to allow young researchers to work in pairs. Here, independent working seemed to be equated by the school with working alone. In this context, however, it can be argued that 'independent' working does not necessarily mean that children should work individually; rather, it implies that they should work independently of adult control. It was striking that where children were able to decide for themselves to work in pairs or in groups they were, despite some disagreements, able to draw on each others' strengths to carry out research with very little direct adult involvement, calling on this only when they needed practical support or access to resources. One of the two girls who dropped out of the initiative at Archway in part because they were not allowed to work as a pair indicated the importance of this: *you can keep going when you're working with friends*. Others indicated that it was not just being able to share the workload that was helpful but also that it was helpful to share ideas and combine their intellectual resources. The absence of this peer support mechanism at Archway between visits from the external facilitator proved to be a significant obstacle to the girls' motivation to persevere.

In contrast, in the two schools where external agencies had imposed the general theme for the children's research and where ownership might consequently have been problematic, the children reported that they felt they had ownership of their research not only because they were able to choose a specific focus but also because they could choose how to work.

The role of the external facilitating adult was recognised by the children and the children's teachers as crucial. Willing to take on a supportive rather than a managerial role, he was sensitive to the children's need to choose how they worked in the ways that Kellett (2005a) suggests is necessary for young researchers to feel in control of the research process. In the current study, it was clear that when young researchers felt empowered and in control, they also felt a sense of ownership (thus establishing a virtuous circle) that was, in itself, motivating. These findings, and those discussed in the preceding sections, accord with those of Stone (cited in Duhon-Haynes, 1996) who identified that the foundations of empowering processes for children include respectful facilitation, ownership, choice, autonomy in setting goals, decision-making, responsibility, independence and collaboration. While Ross and Broh rightly assert that 'personal control increases effort, motivation and persistence in problem solving' (2000:271), in this study, it appears that being able to collaborate was more important for children's sense of ownership and empowerment than having personal control. Collaboration was also important on other counts. Both children and teachers acknowledged that the programme and the work involved was considerably more demanding (in terms of length and content) than other work the children carried out in school. Children indicated that collaboration with their peers was helpful both in terms of alleviating some of the workload as well as allowing them to share ideas.

Being able to choose how they wanted to work revealed that children had competencies that surprised their teachers, for example, team-working skills, literacy and numeracy skills, speaking and listening skills, the ability to persevere and higher order thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis: *I could really see the impact of their writing from their introductions in some writing we did later but it's also about the synthesis, [...] these children are bringing different ideas together, things they would never have thought of before and that's influencing their own opinions and own thoughts.* It also showed that the

children were competent to carry out their own research without being totally dependent on adult management. It could be argued that these competencies are more likely to be in evidence when the young researchers are able to control their own agency in this particular context and where sensitive adult and peer assistance is offered. Bartholomew reasons that 'a significant and independent predictor of competence' is children's confidence in their ability to make choices (cited in Lansdown, 2005:24). The findings of this study suggest that a crucial factor in the development of children's competence might be *adults'* confidence in this ability and their consequent willingness to provide opportunities for this to happen.

5.3 How do children's perceptions of adult-child relationships affect their training and activities as active researchers?

The findings of this study indicate that young researchers felt that the type and level of adult support offered was a resource that had significant impact on their engagement in research activities. In their accounts of their experiences, children identified being able to work independently of direct adult control as a critical factor influencing their engagement. While the children's view here was also acknowledged by the adults involved, it is clear that adults do play a role in facilitating this process. As Lee (1998) suggests, the agency of children results from independence arising from essential dependency.

It is widely argued that supporting children in schools in ways which acknowledge their agency requires giving attention to disrupting the power differentials acknowledged to exist there (see, for example, Devine, 2002; Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Allan and I'Anson; 2004; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004a). The recognition of children's agency is, of course, a fundamental factor in CaR initiatives but as Prout posits, this is not easy as 'practices and relationships' in schools 'can enable or disable the production of voice' (2001:199). It is apposite here to clarify that such difficulties do not always implicate adult-child relationships. Young researchers in this study have reported occasions on which they perceived other children to have deliberately disrupted their data collection. For example,

one young researcher at Rotunda *found some people chose to be silly in questionnaires*. Another, at Archway, thought using a school other than his own for the purposes of data collection *would get more genuine answers*. A further way in which power was exercised between children was perceived by another young researcher at Archway who reported his suspicion that some children *did not want to fill in [his] questionnaire but felt it wouldn't be cool to say they didn't want to do it*. Kellett and Dar's assumption that 'the collection of data from children by a child researcher' is carried out in the 'absence of power relations' (2007:vii) is not, therefore, supported by findings from this study (see also Bucknall in Kellett, forthcoming).

Given Prout's argument, adult-child relationships might, at first, appear potentially less problematic when adults who are external to the school facilitate the research process, since they are in a position to build qualitatively different relationships with the children. This was borne out by the findings here, where many children commented that their relationships with external facilitators were different from those they more usually have with their teachers. One young researcher at Archway, for example, had been assigned one of the school's teachers as her supporter but stated that *with a teacher it's just like something you do in school*. Other young researchers attested to enjoying levels of adult attention that were not experienced in class. What was particularly notable was the perception expressed by many of the young researchers that working with an external facilitator provided them with an opportunity to be taken seriously. *Some adults, like teachers, we don't always get taken seriously in school when we make suggestions*, said one young researcher at Bridge. As Wyness' (1999) own studies found, it can be very difficult for teachers to respond to pupils as individuals when the focus in schools is on nationally prescribed standards and outcomes measured by regular testing. At Pagoda, young researchers identified working on their research topics as a distinctly different experience compared with their usual schoolwork in that the former provided an effective

platform for different ways of speaking: *we actually talked to adults, like, we've never really spoken to an adult properly or serious, we've only talked to them about work or school or something like that.* This suggests that the children felt that external adults had different expectations to those of their teachers: *If you're working with people from school you say what they expect and not express your opinion, you can say what they want to hear but if you're talking to [external facilitator] or someone you can say what [you] want to this person.*

Nevertheless, this study revealed that the power differentials experienced in schools did not appear to be epitomised by a simple adult-child divide. During the course of their projects, young researchers were dependent on their adult facilitators but both were dependent on the adults who controlled their time, space and interaction in school (see Mayall, 2006 and Devine, 2002). In this study, for example, this included access to computers, something that was identified as problematic by children and adults alike. This finding supports Cockburn's argument that neither adults nor children can experience total autonomy because both are subject to 'hierarchies of control' (1998:114). If CaR initiatives are to be sustainable in schools, schools will need to reflect on the power differentials that exist in order to establish what Leitch and Mitchell (2007) describe as the conditions for authentic engagement.

This is important since, as Lodge (2005) points out, within the metaphorical and physical spaces where genuine dialogue can take place, the roles of adults and children change. For example, at Rotunda, where one teacher decided to take on children as researchers as a whole-class initiative, she did so with the support of a trained facilitator who gradually withdrew his support as the teacher gained in confidence. This 'scaffolding', alongside the teacher's willingness to engage differently in working with her class, to trust and respect their choices and decisions and to take risks resulted in what she identified as very positive outcomes for her and for her class. On a small scale, the class became a 'community of

practice’ where traditional power differentials and boundaries were attenuated and both the teacher and the children became joint participants in the research process. This example supports Wenger’s (1998) argument that it is in this kind of context, rather than through curriculum and discipline, that personal transformation through learning takes place.

In this classroom, therefore, there appeared to be the adult-child, teacher-pupil relationships ‘framed in terms of voice, belonging and participation’ of which Devine speaks. These relationships empower children to ‘define and understand themselves as individuals with the capacity to act and exercise their voice in a meaningful manner in matters of concern to them’ (2002:307). Discussions prompted by the children’s choices of topic in this classroom centred on difference and confronted the ‘harsher controversies’ of life which the Crick report (QCA, 1998) recommends primary school-aged children should not be sheltered from but which the teacher felt government guidelines for PSHE and Citizenship did not usually prompt.

It could be argued that moves such as children being able to call external facilitators by their first names attempt to address power differentials and appeared to encourage the building of child-adult relationships that were ‘different’ (*if you was to call them Mister you’re just going to think, “He’s the boss of me, I’ve got to do whatever he says*). Gallagher (2006a) argues, however, that it is too simplistic to consider empowering, in the context of children’s participation, as simply the transfer of power from the powerful to the powerless. This argument is helpful when considering the CaR initiatives explored in this study since such schemes are assumed to be empowering for the children involved (Kellett, 2003; Frost, 2007). It is worth exploring Ashcroft’s (1987) distinction between empowering and empowerment here, especially because these notions are seen as particularly threatening to the status quo in schools and because evidence from this study confirms the importance children attached to the relationships they had with their (adult) facilitators. Ashcroft contrasts empowerment as a product with empowering as a process. It

is this process of ‘bringing into a state of ability/capability to act’ (1987:143) which is significant here since, unlike the establishment of conditions for autonomy that Cockburn (1998) argues is unattainable, it is synonymous with ‘enabling’. This, in turn, involves believing in children’s capabilities and providing the means and opportunities (i.e., the resources) through which their competencies can be transformed into power as action (Ashcroft, 1987).

The children who completed the ‘Diamond Ranking’ activities clearly felt enabled by having adult help only when they needed it and they identified this as an important part of the process. However, this often meant that adult facilitators had to exercise very careful judgements as to just how much support was appropriate. One very specific example was given by an external facilitator at Archway who had grappled with the problems of finding ways to make topic related literature accessible for the children: *do you read it all yourself first and decide what they are going to read or do you present them with lots more than they can actually cope with?* The concern here was that adults leading a young researcher to the literature in this way might detract from the children’s sense of ownership of their projects. However, as one young researcher who had worked with this facilitator indicated, efforts to share relevant and more accessible information with him was appreciated: *even when I hadn’t started my project she’d bring in little clippets on bullying [...] that she’d find in the newspaper.* Although the children at Archway did not appear to share their facilitator’s concern about ownership and welcomed her help with accessing relevant literature to support their projects, Kellett (2005a) argues that a review of the literature, albeit on a small scale, is a component of research process which should be attended to by young researchers engaging in CaR initiatives. This, however, presupposes that children (and schools) have access to, and know how to use the ICT tools and databases used to locate such resources. This may be one aspect of research process where children do not necessarily want to claim ownership. Indeed, as the example above suggests, they may

welcome support and guidance here. This could be problematic for schools taking on CaR initiatives for themselves as they might not have the access to university libraries enjoyed by external facilitators.

Despite the best of intentions, adults were sometimes perceived by the children to have misjudged the level of support offered. To give one example, when the external facilitator at Bridge tried to prevent the young researchers' participants disrupting an interview this was seen by the young researchers as interference. Although this is an isolated example, it indicates how much confidence the young researchers have in their ability to work without direct adult control and this is a factor which needs to be carefully considered by those schools engaging in CaR initiatives, especially if facilitation is internal to the school.

At present, CaR initiatives in English primary schools are currently, and unavoidably, initiated by adults. If they are to be empowering for the children in the ways in which the initiatives were originally conceived (Kellett, 2003), then, as this study confirms, children are very much dependent on adults being able and willing to work with them in ways which are sensitively managed and which allow children to take control. This means children making choices and it means adults respecting those choices but, as the discussion above suggests, this does not mean that children can be totally independent of adults. Children can become active researchers only when adults and children act together to make this happen; they are interdependent.

5.4 What do children perceive to be the outcomes of carrying out their own research projects?

The findings of this study reveal that while expected outcomes seemed to be very closely related to schools' purposes for taking up CaR initiatives, actual outcomes were not always in accord with these. Frost's (2007) point that the drive to empower children by facilitating their active research arises from adult agendas is most apt. In the study reported here, four distinct purposes for schools' engagement with children as researcher initiatives were

identified: (i) as provision for more able children (Archway); (ii) as a ‘tool’ appropriated by an external funding agency for discovering children’s views on school related issues (Bridge); (iii) as evidence that an external agency had fulfilled a ‘top down’ directive to engage children in pupil voice initiatives (Pagoda), and (iv) as an empowering initiative for the children involved (Rotunda and Tower). Only the last of these concurs with the original vision of children as active researchers (Kellett, 2003, 2005b). This is not to say that the children’s experiences were not enjoyable. On the contrary, there was much evidence that the children’s experiences were positive ones. However, conflicts of interest often became apparent as different agendas and, hence, different expectations regarding outcomes came into play.

This section considers, in two parts, how the children involved perceived the outcomes of engaging as young researchers in the CaR initiatives identified in this study. The first part of the discussion focuses on personal and interpersonal outcomes, the second on research outcomes.

5.4.1 Personal and interpersonal outcomes

Other studies have demonstrated that the outcomes of research experience at different levels include increased knowledge, skills and confidence for the children involved (Kirby, 1999; Fieldng 2001, 2004; Sinclair, 2004). An earlier small-scale study (Bucknall, 2005) confirmed these outcomes for children engaged in CaR initiatives in primary schools. As in this earlier study, children in this study have identified that the ways in which their research training and support was facilitated were as important in contributing to these outcomes as research experience *per se*.

The identification by young researchers of an increase in self-esteem as an outcome of engaging in research process supports Ashcroft’s (1987) proposal that a person’s belief in their capability to act is a result of the empowering process. The findings of the present study demonstrate that adult facilitators, whose personal philosophies of empowering

children involve belief in the competencies of children as active researchers, seem to have been successful in enabling such an outcome.

For example, at Pagoda, where the initiative was funded by an external agency as a pupil voice project, the children were supported by experienced ‘empowering’ facilitators. When identifying outcomes, the children’s teachers and headteacher emphasised what they saw as the significant personal development of the children. However, this led to some tension between the school and the external agency since, for the school, outcomes in terms of listening to the children’s findings on a teaching and learning issue were of lesser importance than the children’s personal development. Importantly, although the children themselves acknowledged the impact on their own personal development (*it’s really improved our skills and, like, our self-esteem*), they were more interested in the idea that their findings might make a difference in the school (*one thing that helped us through it was that it would help*). This outcome was expected both by the children and by the external agency. Moreover, it was very motivating to the children. One of this project’s facilitators expressed some disquiet about the conflicting levels of importance attached to these different outcomes: *they [the school] are not interested in what the children found out. That is a worry for me. They are just interested in the children, the process, the children’s confidence*. This example endorses Thomas’ argument that discourses of participation can speak to ‘social’ or to ‘political’ relations (2007:206) and that the same event can be interpreted according to both perspectives.

The increase in inter- and intra-personal skills demonstrated by young researchers across the schools in the study clearly took some adults by surprise. This finding is similar to that of a study reported by Alderson (2000b) which also showed that competencies shown by child co-researchers were unexpected by adults. It is, perhaps, because they were unexpected that, especially at Pagoda, these became a focus at the expense of other outcomes.

Although the outcomes identified by the children and their teachers in these instances focused on the social, it is other expected outcomes which feature so widely in the literature. At Rotunda, for example, the young researchers' investigations and, crucially, their discussions of topics that were often 'difficult', had a real impact on classroom relationships. It is perhaps not surprising that the young researchers here highlighted increased awareness of ethics as a particular outcome of the research process. Outcomes such as those identified by their teacher position children's participation in the political arena with talk of difference, diversity, and skills for citizenship (see, for example, Young, 1989; Ranson, 2000; Power *et al*, 2001). Again, this endorses Thomas' point that participatory practice cannot always be seen as either 'social' or 'political' (2007:206). In this case, certainly, the distinction between the two is blurred, especially in terms of outcomes.

Nevertheless, for the young researchers at Rotunda and at all other schools in this study, enjoyment as an outcome of engaging in research process was frequently cited by the children: *but most of all I had fun*, said a young researcher at Archway; *it's fun being a researcher*, said another at Rotunda. As well as having fun and gaining in self-esteem, increased knowledge and skills were also identified as outcomes by the children across all five schools. These related not only to the knowledge and skills needed to conduct research but also to curriculum areas, especially English, Mathematics and ICT.

However, one of the most striking things to emerge from the study was the children's discovery that other children's views did not necessarily accord with their own. As a young researcher at Pagoda explained, *now we know everyone has their own opinion and it's good if you share that with everybody else*. Similar discoveries have been made by older students engaged in CaR initiatives (Bucknall, 2009). This is significant since Sinclair Taylor (2000) and Clark (2005) highlight the dangers of invoking 'pupil voice' as shorthand for the voices of all children in school, pointing out that no one voice can speak

for all. This is closely related to the arguments of those who identify the voices of the marginalised to be effectively silenced by the voices of those with cultural capital (see, for example, Davies *et al*, 2006; Tisdall *et al*, 2008). Thomas' citation of Young's premise that 'members of a group may share a perspective while at the same time having a range of views on what they need or want, and on how to achieve these things' (2007:210) is pertinent here. If children as active researchers are able to account for the different views which children might have then this could signal a way forward for democratic practice in schools, especially in relation to the difficulties acknowledged to exist with school councils' 'representative' structures (Cox and Robinson-Pant, 2005, 2006; Pedder and McIntyre, 2006). Importantly, the findings from the present study have demonstrated that many of the young researchers' peers indicated that they felt involved in the children's research when they had been asked to participate in data collection. Moreover, as this study shows, it is not only 'the chosen few' who can successfully complete research projects; understanding this might help avoid the selection of young researchers who are seen by their peers as the children who are always selected.

Much is made, in the literature, of children's empowerment through authentic participation in decision making. However, a focus at macro-level removes attention to what is going on at the micro-level. It has been notable in this study that children have not always felt disempowered when their research has not had this kind of impact. An important part of the process for many of the children has been the trust invested in them, through sensitively delivered facilitation, to make decisions for themselves at every stage of their research. This was the source of some surprise to the adults but the external facilitator could see the benefits of enabling the children in this way: *so surprising, you know. [...]* *It's the process that's produced that change. The children could see how they were changing.*

In the context of the CaR initiatives examined here, Sinclair's (2004) argument that children are likely to feel empowered only when they see they have had an impact on decision making that prompts change is not fully supported. Neither does the study support Wyness' (2006a) claim that children's rights to participate, to express opinions and to be heard must necessarily be mediated by adults. When working in pairs or groups, the young researchers in this study demonstrated their ability to negotiate decisions between themselves. However, as discussed in the previous section, where young researchers were given a choice about ways of working, the decision to offer this choice was in the gift of adults. It seems that young researchers are reliant on adults to create the discursive spaces in which children can make their voices heard. Again, this supports the point made earlier that children can become active researchers only when adults and children act together.

It is interesting that while the children and some adults talked about the choices and decisions that had been made, no mention was made of children's rights. This suggests that the children either did not know about their rights as set out in the UNCRC (a not uncommon finding: see, for example, CRAE, 2008b, 2009b) or that they were unable to make any connections between their rights and the CaR initiatives. In either case, as Howe and Covell (2005) state, people need to know about their rights in order for democratic practice to be achieved. Although Wyness *et al* (2004) suggest that spaces which enable children to acquire and practice citizenship skills are more likely to be successful if they are small-scale and occur locally, the potential for CaR initiatives to provide children with experience in democratic decision making (Kellett, forthcoming) is not likely to be realised unless rights education and wider practices in schools are attended to. As Willow *et al* suggest, an effective and inclusive citizenship for children is dependent on 'new ways for adults and children to relate to each other in their daily lives' (2004:8; see also Cockburn, 2007).

It is early days for children as active researchers in primary schools and it is reasonable to suppose that there is vested interest in the initiatives being seen as 'successful'. For external facilitators, in particular, professional credibility is likely to be at stake. As there seems to be some disparity between the outcomes valued by children and those valued by adults, the findings suggest more questions than answers. Who should decide if the children's research projects have been successful? Who should decide where the value of the children's research lies? Who should decide what the most 'important' outcomes are - children or adults? These questions are as yet unanswered but they do need to be asked and suggest that questions framed around 'outcomes' might usefully be added to Shier's typology of participation and the questions it frames around 'openings', 'opportunities' and 'obligations' (2001:111).

5.4.2 Research outcomes

If the primary aim of children as researcher initiatives is to empower children through facilitating opportunities to make their voices heard, then dissemination of their research output must be a key consideration. As with any research project, impact is always dependent on identifying appropriate audiences for the findings. In this study, the dissemination opportunities provided for the young researcher varied and are summarised in Table 5.1.

When children are researchers they are not able to target interested and potentially influential audiences in the ways that adult researchers can. There seems to be an assumption on the part of adults that when there is a captive audience of peers, other children will be interested in the young researchers' findings. It is as if all their interests are held in common. This assumption is not made about adults. Some young researchers found it disheartening to present to an audience of their peers who were not interested in their topics and who were not in a position to be influenced by their findings. They could see that their research would not have an impact. As one young researcher at Archway said

so succinctly, *if it's not going to be any use to anyone, then why are you doing it?* It was not enough for the young researchers that dissemination events were sometimes a celebration of achievement.

SCHOOL	DISSEMINATION OPPORTUNITIES
Archway	Written reports PowerPoint presentations to other children and teachers in school
Bridge	Written reports PowerPoint presentations to a children's conference at an external venue Findings included in an adult-written research report for the initiating funding body
Pagoda	Whole group PowerPoint presentation Creative presentation to other children and teachers in school
Rotunda	Written reports PowerPoint presentations to children and teachers from other schools in the borough during a dedicated event at an external venue
Tower	Written reports (optional) PowerPoint presentations to other children and teachers in school

TABLE 5.1 Dissemination opportunities for young researchers

Positive and influential audiences for children's research need to be, and sometimes have been, sought by adults. For example, some children whose research features on the CRC website have presented their findings to audiences at the Cabinet Office, the Department of Transport and the British Thyroid Foundation. However, opportunities such as these are still relatively rare. 'Power', states Rowe, 'is the right to have your definition of reality prevail over other people's definition of reality' (quoted in John, 2003:47), yet this influential aspect of the research process is one over which the young researchers in this study felt that they had little or no control.

Even when children had been able to make other decisions throughout the research process, decisions about the form of their research output, in terms of product, were usually made by adults. For example, written reports were insisted on where the young

researchers were more able and were also produced by children in the other projects studied. Production of these was identified by children in this study as difficult and, for some, the most difficult part of the process. For example, two young researchers at Archway reported: *getting your own data and looking at it, I could do that, but I couldn't write up my thing on my own and I could do the research myself but I need adult guiding or a more experienced researcher for my report.*

The adults interviewed confirmed that the process of writing research reports needs to be scaffolded carefully for children of this age in order that the children retain a sense of ownership. They also confirmed that it is very difficult for children of this age to include a literature review of any substance because they do not have access to the resources which adult researchers call on for this purpose. This raises the question of why written reports were felt to be the most appropriate form of dissemination by teachers and who they expected to be the target audience. The perception of written reports as appropriate outputs favours the literacy based and adult practices frequently adopted by school councils. These practices have been criticised, not least because they may only be accessible to the most able (Cox and Robinson-Pant, 2005, 2006). This study demonstrated that, for some children, more visual and verbal approaches to dissemination were found to be helpful, and that these approaches were more likely to prompt discussion, especially where audiences were interested in what the children had to say.

For the children at Archway whose engagement as researchers was seen to have the potential to fulfil their needs as more able learners, written research reports provided evidence of academic achievement where this was identified as a primary outcome. While not unreasonable, there are tensions here not only between the expectations of external facilitators working with the children who subscribe to children's empowerment and those of the children's teachers but also between those teachers and the children. These tensions were manifest both in the children's disappointment that no-one seemed particularly

interested in their research as something of worth in its own right and in the appraisal of the children's headteacher who asserted that some children were capable of producing work of higher quality. The children's research reports, in this instance, were not expected to have any influence and dissemination opportunities, limited to presentations to their peers and their teachers, were a token gesture.

Alderson (2001) and Coad and Lewis (2004) view a likely outcome of projects investigating children's lives as enhanced recognition of children's status as a user group, with the findings being drawn upon to inform policy and practice. However, they are referring to adult-led research. As discussed above, in the CaR projects examined here, where children are self-directed researchers they seem to be less assured of this particular outcome. The rather more tentative assertion made by Hartas (2008), that children's engagement in inquiry as researchers might lead to appreciations of diversity and difference is supported by this study, although evidence for the consequent awareness of rights and democracy she proposes is less secure.

In this study, *knowing what you are doing the research for* was identified by young researchers to be an important factor in their experiences. The findings of this study suggest that what needed is dialogue between the children and all the adults involved to clarify the purpose of the children's engagement. As Sinclair (2004) and Cox and Robinson-Pant (2005) make clear, it is important to be honest with children about the purposes, realities and potential of participatory activities and to come to some agreement about what these are. Thus, as with the discussion regarding personal outcomes for the young researchers, this discussion relating to research outcomes has raised further questions which might usefully be asked when coming to such an agreement: Who will benefit from the knowledge generated about children's lives? and Who is responsible for the outcomes, adults, children or both, together?

CaR initiatives in English primary schools are a relatively recent innovation and although some short-term outcomes for the children (and schools) involved in this study have been recognised, it is too soon to identify what kind of sustained impact they might have. This is an area where future research will be needed.

5.5 Theoretical contribution

Analysis of the data generated during this study has informed a proposed model for CaR initiatives in English primary schools (Figure 4.19, page 259, hereafter referred to as the CaR model). Other models for children's 'voice' and children's participation have been proposed previously. They ask questions and/or highlight issues which adults working with children and young people on initiatives which fall under the umbrella of voice and participation might usefully consider in order to inform and improve practice. However, none of these are specific to CaR initiatives. More importantly, there is no indication that children's identification of significant elements, drawn from their own experiences, have been a consideration in their construction.

A comparison of the proposed CaR model and three existing models is made below in Table 5.2. Discussed previously in Chapter 2, Hart's (1992) 'Ladder of Participation' and Shier's (2001) 'Pathways to Participation' are designed as tools to help adults think about children's participation in projects while Fielding's (2001a) 'Nine interrogative sites' offer a device for adults to evaluate conditions for student voice projects in schools. The 'considerations' listed on the left-hand side of Table 5.2 are numerous and have emerged from analysis of the data generated with both child and adult participants in this study, attesting to the complex nature of the CaR initiatives. Where areas are shaded, this indicates that they are also accounted for in the other models featured. It must be emphasised that the identification of 'missing' elements is not a criticism of these models. The table serves to show only that they are not adequate when considering CaR initiatives in English primary schools (although they are undoubtedly useful in raising questions

which need to be asked by adults when contemplating the setting up of ‘voice’ and participation initiatives).

To illustrate this point, the models constructed by Shier and Hart, for example, were not designed to be specific to school-based initiatives and so have not needed to take into account the internal and external constraints which operate in those contexts. While Fielding’s model takes into account the internal constraints which operate in secondary schools (and this study has shown that many of these accord with those found to exist in primary schools), the influence of external constraints is not considered. In this study, such constraints have been shown to exert considerable influence on the young researchers’ experiences. As further illustration, of the three models which are used for comparison here, only Hart’s makes explicit the notions of children being able to volunteer for a project, of children being able how to decide how it should be carried out and of adults not ‘taking charge’. These issues, too, have been shown to be particularly significant in this study.

Both Shier and Fielding employ questions as the basis of each of their models. In addition, Shier relates his questions to different levels of participation. In this way, the format of Shier’s model bears comparison with Hart’s. The CaR model adopts neither of these forms. Instead, an attempt has been made to make explicit, in the model itself, all those factors which need to be considered before setting up CaR initiatives in English primary schools. By demonstrating the relationships between the different elements of the initiatives and by identifying issues which are influenced by these elements and the relationships between them, it is hoped that understandings of the model will not be wholly reliant on accompanying elucidation. (It was necessary, for example, to examine Shier’s explanation of his model (2001:110-115) in order to identify all those elements which are identified in Table 5.2. and which would otherwise not have been apparent.)

Importantly, the construction of the CaR model that has emerged from this research has been informed by children's perspectives of these initiatives as well as by those of adults.

CONSIDERATIONS	MODEL			
	CaR model	'Ladder of participation' ¹	'Pathways to participation' ²	'Nine interrogative sites', ³
Prior information				
Identified purpose/expected outcomes				
Child-adult relationships/dialogue				
Adult-adult dialogue				
Children volunteer to participate				
Children making decisions about how they participate				
Skills training for children				
Skills training for adults				
Time				
Physical space				
Children decide when adult support is needed				
Access to resources				
Access to appropriate audiences				
Children choose media for communicating to audience				
Feedback				
External constraints				
Reflection				

¹Hart (1992:9) ²Shier (2001:111) ³Fielding (2001a:100)

■ indicates that this element has been considered explicitly in the model itself and/or in any explanation which accompanies it in the texts cited

TABLE 5.2 A comparison of the CaR model and other models of children's voice and participation projects

Representing children's perspectives in this way has not previously been attempted. It could be argued, therefore, that existing models present a somewhat partial account of the relationships between the various factors that can facilitate or inhibit children's participation in 'voice' initiatives. Also, although the research described here does not draw on a particularly large sample of cases, there is considerable consistency in the children's views across all cases suggesting that the findings offer an advance in our knowledge and understanding of possible barriers to children's participation in young researcher initiatives in English primary schools. The original model and training programme developed by Kellett (2003) for children as active researchers was informed by the pilot studies situated within the context of the primary school. As these studies (Kellett, 2003, 2005b) did not attempt to account for the potential barriers to children's engagement in research process in a systematic way, again, the findings from the current study will contribute to refinement and clarification of Kellett's original model.

The new CaR model presented here is necessarily predicated on the findings of this thesis. Nevertheless, rather than being seen as a conclusion and end point, it should be viewed as a starting point. It is expected that this new model will need modification as a result of further research, evaluation and reflection. Nevertheless, as it currently stands, the model offers a more inclusive framework for understanding the factors that have an impact on the success or otherwise of participatory initiatives in primary schools, based on the views of children as well as adults. As such it will hopefully increase understanding of how CaR initiatives can inform policy and practice concerning how best to facilitate primary school children's participation in the democratic process. Importantly, this study revealed that although participatory initiatives have been informed by Government policies and recommendations that have been developed to satisfy the UN's rights agenda, the children in this study did not appear to be aware of this. Indeed, they did not perceive that being a young researcher necessarily had anything to do with their right to freedom of expression

or the right that their views should be given due weight. A clear implication of this research, therefore, is that if policy initiatives such as *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003) and *The Children's Plan* (DCSF, 2007) are to be effective, schools and policy makers need to pay more attention to rights education.

5.6 Methodological contribution

This section focuses on the two distinct methodological contributions made by the study. The first of these relates to appropriate research techniques for use when working with primary school children. The second relates to young researchers' perceptions of the research techniques which they have used in the contexts of their own studies.

5.6.1 Adapting an existing technique when working with children

Focus groups were adopted as the primary research tool with child participants in this study and the participatory techniques used therein were successful in engaging children's attention. This was especially so with the 'Diamond Ranking' activities. Previously, Thomas and O'Kane (1998b) have used this as a method for prompting discussion with individual children. Here it also proved to be effective in a group context. Because they were able to complete their sheets individually in a space they chose for themselves, the child participants appreciated the opportunity this gave them for privacy. Although in a group situation, they were therefore able to express their opinions in a way which they felt avoided their responses being influenced by others' views. Furthermore, adapting the method by giving values to each ranking position allowed the same data to be analysed quantitatively and permitted an assessment of the degree of agreement not only within but also across groups.

Importantly, the children recommended a further adaptation following their evaluation of the method. In common with Thomas and O'Kane's approach, the Diamond Ranking activities here initially used statements generated by children during an earlier study. However, the children found this to be problematic, arguing that such statements could not

accurately reflect their own experiences. Providing children with the opportunity to generate and then rank their own statements not only allowed them to take control of an adult-imposed technique, it also generated compelling data. It is suggested, therefore, that when privileging children's own perspectives is central to a research study, as it was here, listening to and acting on their evaluations of the research techniques adopted is crucial. As this study demonstrates, children's suggestions about data collection methods deemed 'child-' or 'participant-friendly' by adults (see, for example, Christensen and Prout, 2002; Punch, 2002; Fraser, 2004) offer useful methodological insights.

5.6.2 Young researcher's preferred methods

Kellett's (2005a) model of children as active researchers focuses on the training of young researchers in 'traditional' data collection methods, i.e., interviews, questionnaires, observations and experiments. As these are not particularly 'child-friendly', it seems reasonable to suggest that when children engage in their own active research they might want or need to adapt such methods. In addition, training in traditional methods may need to be complemented by training in other methods. For example, Cox and Robinson-Pant (2005, 2006) successfully introduced a variety of visual methods to children while working to improve the work of school councils. Moreover, recent personal experience and communications have confirmed that the training of young researchers by CRC facilitators is increasingly including the introduction of other (particularly, participatory) methods.

Evidence from this study, however, suggests that the young researchers who participated in this study did not want to adopt innovative methods, even when these were incorporated into their training. While the children did not raise this specific issue during focus groups, interviews with adult facilitators revealed possible reasons for the young researchers' decisions. At Pagoda the external facilitators had discussed this with the children and one reported that

they like the formality, the seriousness of more formal techniques. They wanted to be seen as not having a play or something like that, they are doing proper serious research. [...] They didn't want to use [participatory technique] for the people they were interviewing. It could have been an issue about credibility and status and things like that as well.

On the other hand, some young researchers reported difficulties with developing traditional research instruments, for example, using open questions when interviewing their peers and in making questionnaire items understandable to younger children. It seems reasonable to suggest therefore, that CaR initiatives need to allow time for reflection, evaluation and discussion about the problems encountered and consideration of whether the adoption of alternative techniques might have helped to avoid these. It is, however, difficult to see how this might happen where time is in short supply, which raises questions about 'one-off' CaR initiatives that do not provide children with opportunities to improve their new research skills further.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, for some young researchers producing written reports was challenging. This was an aspect of the traditional research process where they identified they needed most adult support. At Pagoda, the children were not expected to produce written reports, as one external facilitator believed this would take too long and risk losing their interest. Similarly, the external facilitator at Bridge suggested that extra time would allow different ways of presenting the children's research to be explored. She drew attention to the fact that since children who take part in CaR initiatives usually have their work published on the CRC website, and since research reports found there most often take the form of written reports, this is what the children she worked with aspired to. This is a very valid criticism. She argued that *If there were other things for children to be able to see [on the website] it would encourage more children to want to do it. There are more ways [...] of disseminating.* Recent experience supports this view. The number of PowerPoint presentations on the CRC website is increasing and both Kellett (2005a) and personal experience confirm that children report producing these as highly motivating.

Evidence from this study, together with these observations, suggests that the range of choices regarding forms of dissemination offered to young researchers should be widened.

5.7 Critique of the study

During the design and implementation of the research reported in this thesis, the privileging of children's perspectives has always been a priority, one which relates to my role of a CRC facilitator and to my role as researcher. However, for pragmatic reasons it was not possible to do this to the extent originally envisaged. A crucial factor here was schools' differing expectations and the priorities they attached to their CaR initiative and to my involvement with these as researcher. In some cases this meant that the resources available to me, such as time with the children and space to work, were frequently subject to change.

As reported in Chapter 3, when arriving in three of the schools to conduct focus groups with the children, the time allocated for this was inadequate. Inevitably, this meant that the amount and type of data generated with the children was restricted. Conversely, time to interview adults was often plentiful. As a result, a more substantial amount of data was generated with adults than with children. This, in itself, seemed symptomatic of what the schools perceived the purpose and outcomes of the CaR initiatives to be. At Archway, for example, where this was seen as provision for more able pupils, it did not seem important to provide spaces or time for me to talk with the children but both were provided in order for me to talk with adults involved even during teaching hours. Consequently, while every attempt has been made, during the presentation and discussion of the findings of the study, to prioritise children's interpretations of their experiences, adult interpretations sometimes outnumber these, especially where these help to elucidate issues which the children identified but did not offer or have the time to expand on.

Had further time had been available to revisit schools and discuss my interpretations of the data with the children, this problem could have been addressed. The timing of the CaR

initiatives in relation to the school year, the transfer of many of the children to different secondary schools immediately following the first round of data collection and the delays experienced in having interviews transcribed all prevented this. Furthermore, this had an impact on the actual process of analysis, forestalling the adoption of the iterative process initially planned. In view of this, during the planning of future research, consideration would need to be given to how this issue might be addressed. If, as the findings of the study suggest, it is better for children to carry out their research in Year 5 than Year 6, then access to the children during the following year would be easier. Alternatively, visits could be made to the schools both during and after the implementation of the CaR initiatives; this would, at least, allow time for some data to be analysed before any return visit.

There is no doubt that more time spent in each of the settings for the study would have provided further valuable observation data. Again, this was a practical issue since the schools were widespread geographically and the CaR initiatives were being implemented concurrently. If and when CaR initiatives become more widespread, further research of a more longitudinal and/or ethnographic nature might be possible as well as more strategic sampling and selection of cases. Planning such research, however, rests on encouraging more schools to take up and fund CaR initiatives, and, more problematically, on securing funding for further research.

Two criteria which Silverman (2001) suggests are likely to address threats to validity, specifically constant comparison and comprehensive data treatment, have been met in this study. Silverman identifies a further criterion, namely 'deviant (or negative) case analysis'. In retrospect, Archway provided such a case as it became apparent that it was the only school which took up the CaR initiative expressly as provision for more able children. This appears to have influenced the young researchers' experiences in ways which were not always evident in the other schools in the study; such comparisons have been invaluable in making sense of the data. Therefore, when designing future studies, the value of including

a 'deviant' case will need to be borne in mind: identifying Archway as a deviant case during the design stage of the study would have enhanced the validity of the study.

Finally, this study has necessarily involved a single researcher. Although its reliability has been supported by the use of participant generated concepts during the process of analysis, interpretations of the data are inevitably my own. If the study was to be repeated then consideration should be given to involving a research team which included practitioner researchers and child researchers. This would increase the reliability of the study in two ways. Firstly, interpretations of the data would not rely solely on a single, adult, person. This is important, not least because corroboration of coding decisions by another researcher is seen to strengthen the reliability of research (Richards, 2005; Silverman, 2001). Secondly, such an arrangement would help to address adult researcher-child participant power relationships which seem unavoidable no matter how much care is taken to minimise these.

5.8 Future directions

It is, perhaps, time for the methodology of children as active researchers to be revisited. Evidence from this study suggests several directions for future research which might inform and improve future practice. These are outlined briefly below.

- As discussed earlier, potential exists for widening the scope of this study as more primary schools engage with CaR initiatives. What now needs to be done is to draw on the findings of this study and use these as the basis of negotiations with schools so that the problematic issues and barriers to participation identified are addressed from the beginning. In this way, conditions for the implementation of both CaR initiatives and research exploring the initiatives could be improved. This would involve addressing not only practical issues such as the provision of information and the time and space for all necessary work but also, more importantly, attending to purpose and outcomes, selection and diversity, the choices and decisions children

are allowed to make and the value attached to the children's research. Ways in which the impact of external constraints might be minimised also need to be considered, for example, by selecting children from a year group which is not subjected to government-imposed testing. All these factors were found to have an impact on the experiences of both the children and myself as researchers.

- The findings from the study suggest that the current version of CaR training is not necessarily appropriate. Further evaluation of the methods taught and the model of research process underpinning the training is needed. This might be done by systematically comparing the 'traditional' CaR training and research methods with those used in an initiative which sets out to introduce the methods identified by the children in this study as useful and other participatory methods such as those suggested by Punch (2002) and Cox and Robinson-Pant (2005, 2006) alongside others which the children themselves might devise.
- The findings of the study suggest that a restructuring of the traditional CaR model might be helpful in facilitating the delivery of a programme of research training and process that is 'short and fat' rather than 'long and thin'. This was perceived as a better way forward by both child and adult participants. What is needed now is a comparative study which builds on the findings presented here (since these were mostly framed around the 'long and thin' model) in order to explore the factors involved in implementing a 'short and fat' initiative and how these influence the experiences of all those involved.
- Of particular interest is the potential development for the implementation of whole-class CaR initiatives. The work done by the children and their teacher at Rotunda (and begun at Tower) was, and remains, extremely uncommon. The research reported here revealed that there were both advantages and disadvantages to this method. It is not clear, however, to what extent these could be attributed to

differences in the teachers' philosophy, purpose and approach and to what extent they arose from the method of delivery. Also, it is clear that barriers to participation are different for whole-class compared to small group initiatives. Should the opportunity arise, an ethnographic study exploring such an initiative would be helpful in developing a greater understanding of differences between whole-class and small group programmes, particularly in relation to salient issues revealed by the current study, namely selection, freedom of choice, diversity, purpose and expected outcomes.

- This study has focused on CaR initiatives in English primary schools. It is not known if the barriers and issues which appear to exist in that context exist elsewhere where CaR initiatives are implemented, e.g., in primary schools in other parts of the United Kingdom and in other countries, in secondary schools and in other, non-school, contexts. As the Children's Research Centre at The Open University expands its outreach work, there will be opportunities to compare CaR initiatives in a greater variety of settings. Further research is clearly needed in these alternative settings in order to discover if the findings of this study are peculiar to the context in which it was carried out. Similarly, it would be informative to instigate a systematic comparison of CaR initiatives with other young researcher programmes, for example, those conducted by Thomson & Gunter (2006) or those carried out by children and young people at The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation at the University of Central Lancashire.
- It would also be informative to compare and test the claims made by young researcher initiatives regarding the opportunities they offer for children's increased democratic participation in schools with other initiatives that make the same claims (e.g. Griffiths, 2006). In this context, for example, the development of CaR initiatives in supporting the work of schools councils through facilitating more

representative structures for the expression of children's multiple perspectives (see, for example, Bucknall, 2009) would be a particularly useful area for investigation given that democratic representation in this context is currently perceived as problematic (Cox and Robinson-Pant, 2006; Thomas and Crowley, 2006; Whitty and Wisby, 2007a).

- It is not known if outcomes identified in this study, particularly those relating to the personal development of young researchers, are other than short-term. This is a common criticism that can be applied to all educational initiatives that claim to be 'transformative'. All too often evaluations fail to look at long term outcomes due to financial restraints and the difficulties of following up children as they progress through the system. Notwithstanding the difficulties of tracking children as they move on to other schools, however, ways of carrying out long-term evaluations of CaR evaluations need to be found. Such research would inform wider evaluations of participatory activities and further debate about outcomes for children and young people which Percy-Smith (2006), Skelton (2007), Hartas (2008) and others have stated need attention.

It is hoped that further research, as outlined above, would promote the development of the CaR model presented above. At present specific to English primary schools (and, perhaps, only to those included in this study) it cannot yet be known if it is also applicable to other CaR initiatives; primary schools do not provide the only locations where these currently take place. Thus, while this study had a very specific focus, it is hoped that it will have value in informing, evaluating and advancing CaR policy and practice more widely.

Contemplation on future directions, however, cannot be complete without consideration of the broader contexts within which CaR initiatives are situated, i.e., those of children's rights, voice and democratic participation. Griffiths (2006), in her eloquent discussion of public spaces for participation within schools, argues that legitimising children's voices is

often seen, incorrectly, as all that is needed in order for them to feel they can participate. The number of Government policy initiatives which have been directed at schools over the past decade in response to criticisms by the UN Committee seem guilty in this respect. It is simply not enough for schools to be told they must attend to 'pupil voice'. What is needed is for the Government to understand the need for the creation of public spaces in schools in which children and adults can instigate and maintain a mutually respectful intergenerational dialogue which promulgates inclusive democratic practice (Griffiths, 2006; Fielding, 2009). It then needs to examine how the constraints Government policy places on school practices act as barriers to this process. Such a commitment seems unlikely while emphasis remains on standards, attainment and accountability and while the Government resists enshrining in law children's rights to speak and be heard and to actively participate in decision making in schools on matters which concern them.

The original children as researchers model proposed by Kellett (2003, 2005a, 2005b) also makes assumptions. Promotion of a programme of children's research training and active research which purports to empower children cannot stand apart from consideration of the conditions which are necessary to facilitate intended outcomes and the barriers which prevent them. As the findings of this study have shown, CaR initiatives do not and cannot exist in isolation from the messiness of the contexts in which they are implemented. Thus, while wide sweeping changes in Government policy currently seem improbable, and taking into account the findings of this study, CaR initiatives do have the potential to prompt schools which have a genuine desire for change in the ways adults and children relate to one another to establish the spaces in which these and other voice and participation initiatives might happen. In the face of unhelpful Government rhetoric, local realities would seem to signal the way forward.

6. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Alice was very nearly getting up and saying, “Thank you , Sir, for your interesting story,” but she could not help thinking there must be more to come, so she sat still and said nothing.

Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

6.1 Introduction

The study reported here is the first in-depth non-participant study to explore children’s and adults’ experiences of children’s engagement in self-directed research in their English primary schools. Prompted by an earlier study (Bucknall, 2005), three research questions provided drivers for the research reported in this thesis. These addressed actual and potential barriers to children’s active engagement in research process in these settings; children’s perceptions of the adult-child relationships which affected their training and activities as active researchers, and children’s perceptions of the outcomes of carrying out their own research projects. While children’s own perspectives have been privileged, adult interpretations of their own and children’s experiences have proved invaluable in elucidating answers to these questions. Consequently, the findings of the study have informed a proposed model for CaR initiatives in English primary schools. This final chapter summarises the implications of the study’s findings, drawing on these to make recommendations for practice and policy as it relates to these settings.

6.2 Recommendations for practice

If children as researcher initiatives continue to be facilitated in the main by external facilitators, then the findings of this study suggest the need for more *informed* involvement by those who allocate time and resources. It is erroneous for primary schools wanting to take on CaR initiatives to consider that the training and support needs of the young researchers can be provided wholly by adults external to the school. External facilitators and teachers need, together, to consider and ensure the conditions necessary for successful initiatives. Young researchers, despite demonstrating their agency in many stages of the research process, simply cannot carry out their own research in schools without support

and external facilitators, as outsiders, appear to have no more control over the allocation of school based resources than do the children. It is also vital that time is built into the initiatives for experienced facilitators to help teachers develop an understanding of the research process in the context of children as active researchers, of the workload this imposes on the children and of the need for the children to be able to make informed choices about participation, topics and ways of working.

Working together from the earliest stages, children, their teachers and external facilitators need to develop and maintain a dialogue which embraces not only informing these choices but also joint agreement on aims, purposes, resources and expected outcomes. This will be especially important where schools want children in Year 6 to engage in the CaR initiatives. At present, there is no suggestion that the pressures of externally imposed testing are likely to be removed from this year group and their teachers. Serious consideration, therefore, should be given to which cohort would be most likely to engage effectively with research process.

The Children's Research Centre should also take heed of teachers', facilitators' and children's suggestions about shortening the duration of the initiatives (of making it 'short and fat' instead of 'long and thin') in order to sustain children's interest and, hence, their motivation. While this would necessarily involve increased levels of support from within the schools in between facilitator visits, this is likely to prove beneficial, increasing the schools' awareness of and engagement with the initiatives and the need for adequate resources.

Currently, the children's training does not attend to the need for a period of reflection once they have completed their research projects and time for such reflection is not built into the programme for the implementation of the initiatives. This needs to change. Young researchers need to reflect on their experiences of research process and consider if and how these might have been different. Furthermore, if schools are to take on responsibility for

CaR initiatives, similar consideration must be given to the teachers' training. It might be more appropriate, therefore, to view the implementation of CaR initiatives as action research where evaluation and critical reflection are key elements of the cycle.

6.3 Recommendations for policy

6.3.1 Children's Research Centre policy

The findings of the study suggest two ways in which the CRC might usefully improve its current policy. The first of these is making clear the necessity for, and to insist on, the kind of dialogue described above *before* committing to support any CaR initiative in school. In this way, the expectations of all involved parties can be clarified and conditions established which would be favourable to such expectations being met.

Further ways need to be found to decrease schools' reliance on external facilitation in order to increase their ownership of the projects. Although not a new idea, since this has been done on a few occasions, an increased focus on offering training to teachers rather than to the young researchers themselves does seem to be one possible way forward for the CRC and one which might help to avoid CaR initiatives being instigated externally as was the case for most of the schools in this study.

6.3.2 Educational policy

Whether schools continue to rely on external facilitation or take on responsibility for implementing and running the CaR initiatives themselves, the demands of the curriculum currently present a sizeable barrier to schools wishing to engage with extra-curricular activities. It is possible that the reduction in curriculum prescription planned for 2011, when the recommendations of the recently published Primary Curriculum (Rose) Review (DCSF, 2009) are implemented, might help to alleviate this problem. However, it is interesting that the government imposed remit for the Rose review did not include examining the regime of external testing which children, teachers and facilitators in this study have found to be onerous. The independent Cambridge Primary (Alexander) Review

(2009), however, has confirmed that the Year 6 tests (and the government standards agenda of which they are part) are responsible for narrowing the primary school curriculum and denying children the very kinds of learning which the findings of this study demonstrate to be outcomes of their engagement in research process. It remains to be seen if the Government takes heed of its recommendations, thus opening up the metaphorical spaces in which children can undertake their own active research.

6.4 Summary

CaR initiatives are important. The findings of this study have shown that, when conditions are favourable, such initiatives can empower children by providing a means through which they can voice their concerns and interests and affirm their capability to act. The potential of the initiatives to offer children freedom of choice engages children in decision making at a personal level and in their negotiations with adults. Yet voice here is not only individual representation. Through their research activities, young researchers also voice the concerns, interests and concerns of others, paving the way for increased democratic participation and citizenship status for children. As the CaR model that has emerged here demonstrates, voice, choice and participation in this context are interrelated and interdependent. Where conditions are unfavourable, however, children feel excluded, disempowered and disengaged. It is important, therefore, that the initiatives are implemented and supported in ways which will promote their success.

This chapter has drawn on the findings of this study to make recommendations for improving policy and practice in relation to CaR initiatives in English primary schools. It is hoped that considering and following these recommendations will help to address the issues and barriers that children, teachers and facilitators have identified as problematic. Moreover, it is hoped that these will contribute to the development of such programmes so that the positive outcomes also identified can be assured for a growing number of young researchers.

Despite some encouraging signs, unless children directing their own research is seen and valued as an empowering process and unless children, teachers and facilitators engage jointly in reflective practices in order to attempt to overcome the barriers identified in this study, CaR initiatives in primary schools are unlikely to become anything other than standalone activities, instigated externally and taken up for reasons which are insufficiently examined.

... and Alice thought to herself, "I wonder what they will do next!"
Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Examples of topics chosen by primary school children for their research projects and a summary of the CRC training programme

Examples of topics chosen by primary school children for their research projects:

- Possible links between extra-curricular music and future aspirations
- Children's worries
- The impact of subject enjoyment on subject achievement
- Getting around as the child of a wheelchair user
- What children think about first-aid training
- What children and adults think about community police
- Children's experiences of having a thyroid disorder
- Children and bereavement
- Whether playing a musical instrument affects how good you are at maths
- The social aspects of home-schooling
- The environments children prefer for doing their homework in
- Children's views about school hours
- Exploring what people think about water use
- Gender differences in pupils' use of computers
- Investigating the views of pupils about mixed gender football
- How children are affected by the nature of their parents' jobs
- Social interaction between children and lunchtime supervisors
- The social nature of television viewing in children
- What children think about their local housing estates
- Children's views on payment for different jobs
- Safety at bus stops from children's points of view
- The public's opinion about nuclear power and wind power
- The public's opinion on cloning
- Year 6 children's emotions towards KS2 statutory tests (SATs)
- What children think about television and literacy
- How confidence affects literacy

Research reports written by the children who chose these topics, together with those written by many others, can be found on the CRC website at:

<http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk>

A summary of the CRC training programme

The children's research training programme has two main components. These comprise a series of sessions that offer training in research methods together with dedicated support to help children develop and carry out a research project of their own. The teaching and learning model used by CRC trainers involves active learning, debate and discussion between children, who:

- consider what research is
- engage critically with other people's research
- consider and apply research ethics
- learn about different methods for generating (qualitative and quantitative) data
- learn about (quantitative and qualitative) data analysis
- develop report writing and presentation skills.

Delivery of the training element of the programme is flexible and is tailored to meet the needs and circumstances of individual schools that choose to participate. For example, at Archway, the training was delivered during ten weekly sessions of one hour before the children were supported in carrying out their own projects. In contrast, at Pagoda, the training element was delivered during three whole-day sessions by CRC facilitators with the children being supported in working on their own projects between and after training sessions. As a final example, at Rotunda, where a whole-class model was adopted, it was delivered by the class teacher during curriculum time in sessions of varying length over more than one school term before the children began their own research. Thus, following, or in tandem with the training programme, the children are supported in:

- identifying a narrowly focused research topic
- designing a research project
- designing qualitative and/or quantitative research instruments for generating their data
- generating their data (this usually involves help with practical arrangements)
- engaging in quantitative and/or qualitative data analysis, as appropriate
- interpreting their findings
- discussing their findings in relation to those of other researchers
- reporting and presenting their research.

As a general rule, programmes in primary schools run during a single school year, from October to May. Further details can be found on the CRC website.

APPENDIX B Examples of letters of information and consent for participants



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(Date)

Dear Parent/Guardian

**Children's Experiences of Becoming Young Researchers in Primary Schools:
Letter of Information**

I am a doctoral student at the Open University, carrying out research on the experiences of primary school pupils who are themselves trained to become researchers. I am also a mother of two and a fully qualified primary school teacher with enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance.

I will be visiting your child's school on (date) to carry out a group interview with the children who have been taking part in research training and who have been carrying out their own research projects. If the children are happy for me to do so, I might tape record the discussion. I might also ask the children to complete a short questionnaire.

It is hoped that my research findings will help the development of different ways of training young researchers in schools and so it is important that the views of the children themselves are collected. However, taking part in my research study is, of course, entirely voluntary. If your child does not want to take part, or if you do not want your child to participate, she or he does not have to. If one or both of you change your minds once you have given consent, no matter when, just let me know in whatever way you find most comfortable. Please be assured that there will be no negative consequences for your child if you decide to withdraw consent.

Interview transcripts and completed questionnaires, together with any audio tapes that are used, will be stored safely for as long as they are needed. Information stored on a computer will be password protected and only I will have access to it. All the information I collect as a result of my research activities will be treated as strictly confidential and will remain anonymous. The results of the study are for research purposes only; if they are published, no names, including that of your child's school, will be revealed.

Please share the contents of this letter with your child before completing the attached consent form. Completed forms should be returned to (name) at the school before (date). Please keep this covering letter as it gives my contact details. If you have any questions concerning my research study, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. Alternatively, if you feel you have a concern that cannot be sorted out by speaking with me, please contact my supervisor, Mary Kellett, on 01908 652866 or, via e-mail, at M.Kellett@open.ac.uk.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Sue Bucknall

Title of project:
Children's Experiences of Becoming Young Researchers in Primary Schools

LETTER OF CONSENT (parent)

I hereby consent to my child, whose name is _____, taking part in a group interview which may be tape recorded and/or completing a questionnaire.

I have read and retained a copy of the Letter of Information and the purpose of this study has been explained to my satisfaction. I have been offered the opportunity to discuss the research project further should I want to do so.

I understand that the findings of the research study may be published but that all names, where used, will be changed.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that my child is free to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO ALLOW MY DAUGHTER/SON TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____

LETTER OF CONSENT (pupil)

I have been told that my parent or guardian has said that it's OK for me to take part, if I want to, in a research study which is about children learning to become researchers. This will involve me taking part in a group interview which might be tape recorded if everyone taking part is happy about that. I understand that I might also be asked to complete a questionnaire.

I understand that I do not have to take part in the research study. I also understand that even if I agree to take part to begin with, I can change my mind at any time. I will just let Sue Bucknall know in whatever way is most comfortable for me. I have been told that if I change my mind, any data already collected from me will be deleted if at all possible. If this is not possible, no-one will be able to tell that it came from me. Whatever decisions I make about taking part in this project, I understand that my membership of the school research club will not be affected in any negative way.

I agree that the information I give may be used in a written report. I understand that my name and the name of my school will be changed in any writing that is published and that all copies of interviews, questionnaires and audio tapes that are used will be kept safely only for as long as they are needed.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Signature of pupil: _____

Date: _____

Project title: Children's Experiences of Becoming Young Researchers in Primary Schools

NAME:

Research interview consent

- I understand that my headteacher has said it is OK for me to take part, if I want to, in this research study which is about children learning to become researchers.
- I am happy to take part in *(an interview with Sue Bucknall/ a group interview with Sue Bucknall and other children in my year group)*.
- I have been told that I do not have to take part if I don't want to.
- I have been told that even if I agree to take part, I can leave at any time or ask for a break if I need one.
- I understand that if I am not happy for the interview to be tape recorded I just need to say so.
- I have been told that no-one will know the information I give came from me and that no-one's real name, or the name of my school, will be used in any written report about Sue Bucknall's research study.
- I have been told that written copies and tapes of the group discussion will be kept safely only for as long as they are needed and will then be destroyed.

Signed:

Date:

Project title: Children's Experiences of Becoming Young Researchers in Primary Schools

NAME:

Research questionnaire consent

- I understand that my headteacher has said it is OK for me to take part, if I want to, in this research study which is about children learning to become researchers.
- I am happy to complete the questionnaire I have been given.
- I have been told that I do not have to complete it if I don't want to.
- I understand that even if I agree to complete it, I can stop before I reach the end if I want to.
- I understand that I must not write my name on the questionnaire so that no-one will be able to tell that my answers came from me.
- I have been told that no-one's name, or the name of my school, will be used in any written report about Sue Bucknall's research study.
- I have been told that my questionnaire will be kept safely only for as long as it is needed and will then be destroyed.

Signed:

Date:



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(Date)

Dear (Name)

**Children's Experiences of Becoming Young Researchers in Primary Schools:
Letter of Information**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the above study. As I explained when we *(spoke/communicated by e-mail)*, I am a doctoral student at the Open University, carrying out research on the experiences of primary school pupils who are themselves trained to become researchers. I am also a fully qualified primary school teacher with enhanced CRB clearance.

As discussed, I will be visiting *(venue)* on *(date/time)* to *(conduct an interview with you/hold a group interview)*. If you are happy for me to do so, I will tape record our *(conversation/ discussion)* and might also make notes.

It is hoped that my research findings will help the development of different ways of training young researchers in schools. It is important, therefore, that the views of adults who have been involved in working with young researchers are collected in addition to those of the children. However, participation in my research study is, of course, entirely voluntary. If you change your mind about participating, no matter when, please just let me know in whatever way you feel most comfortable. In this case, any data already collected from you will be destroyed if at all possible.

Interview transcripts, notes and any audio tapes that are used will be stored safely for as long as they are needed. Information stored on a computer will be password protected and only I will have access to it. All the information I collect as a result of my research activities will be treated as strictly confidential and will remain anonymous. The results of the study are for research purposes only; if they are published, no individual names or the names of any institutions will be used.

I would be grateful if you could complete the attached letter of consent and return it to me when we meet. Please keep this covering letter as it gives my contact details. If you have any questions concerning my research study or your participation in it, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. Alternatively, if you feel you have a concern that cannot be resolved by speaking with me, please contact my supervisor, Mary Kellett, on 01908 652866 or, via e-mail, at M.Kellett@open.ac.uk.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Sue Bucknall



Title of project:

Children's Experiences of Becoming Young Researchers in Primary Schools

I, _____ (print name)

agree to take part in this research project.

I have received and kept a copy of the Letter of Information which explains the purposes of the project and I understand that if I need further information, or wish to discuss the project or my participation in it, then I can get in touch with Sue Bucknall or her supervisor, Mary Kellett, using the contact details given.

I have been informed that my participation is voluntary and that I can decide to withdraw my consent to participate at any time. If I choose to do this then I will inform Sue Bucknall in whatever way is most comfortable for me. I have been told that if I withdraw from the project after data has been collected from me, every effort will be made to delete that data. I also understand that all data collected from me will remain confidential and anonymous and that my name and the names of any institutions with which I am connected will be changed in data transcriptions and written reports.

I agree that the information that I provide can be used for educational or research purposes and that I assign the copyright for my contribution to the Faculty for use in education, research and publication.

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C Examples of raw data

Extract from interview with class teacher, Rotunda

S - Right so if we take up where we left off. You were talking about the difficulties of trying to do it in a class that wasn't really yours.

K - Oh that, yes and there were a couple of times where the teacher said to me...she made comments, in a nice way but letting me know that she felt I was taking up her space.

S - Did the children, did she support the children in-between sessions?

K - No.

S - Right, so she didn't really work...

K - But I don't think that's, to be fair to her I think that's because she was under so much pressure herself; this was an extremely difficult class.

S - No I wasn't meaning that she didn't want to I was just trying to work out if that actually happened or not.

K - No it didn't happen.

S - Right, so she didn't have any ownership?

K - No, she had no ownership and I think partly because it hadn't come from her she wasn't able to see...she didn't get into it enough to see the links between the literacy, the numeracy, the science, all these things, the PHSE that Children as Researchers covers for you. Because of that, where as I'm using my timetable of other subjects to use...well I use Children as Researchers to teach my literacy; I was teaching complex sentences one week I used Children as Researchers to do that and the guided reading, we've done so much guided reading for Children as Researchers. My objectives, if you read them, are actually literacy objectives but it just happens that I'm using the Children as Researchers work to support that.

So she didn't make those links because she didn't have ownership of it, so that meant I was coming in and doing something isolated that she was half part of really and when I needed for the work to move on and I needed for the children to get to certain stages it just became a bit difficult; not masses of tension because I actually got on very well with her so it didn't strain our relationship but she did feel the need to let me know that 'Karen your being a pain in the arse at times'.

So that was a problem, then I forgot about...we were talking earlier about the sensitivity of the topics that children choose and I said these things I didn't know about the children but actually I thought about it and I thought in the normal course of my day as a full time class room teacher I didn't ever feel I really had the time to have these conversations. Your so driven by lesson objectives and the national curriculum or your strategies that even with your PHSE I've got an objective already from the QCA or something so I'm always giving the children...'and I've got to get this done haven't I because I've got to tick my boxes.' Where as Children as Researchers, when you start with Children as Researchers and you come into the curriculum you cover a lot of the curriculum and your also giving the children the opportunity to pick those subjects, therefore we naturally have time to start having these discussions and that enables me to know these children that bit more. Does that make sense?

S - Yes. Its interesting isn't it, I hadn't really thought about the enhanced relationship and personal knowledge aspect of it and how it impacts.

K - Oh definitely. It makes me smile, I think I really enjoy it because there was a child in my class who, we were reading one of the research papers on recycling and she was absolutely incensed because she lives in a flat and 'If you live in a flat its different and its not fair.' She was so cross an that's actually what she's doing her research about but for me too see this child, this is something in her life outside...I don't know that everyday they go down stairs and mum moans because you can't do your recycling because its all been spilled out because those teenagers are emptying it out and nobody ever empties it because you live in a flat and the borough don't care and...this is a whole area of her life I don't know about and now I do. To see this child standing there so cross about recycling because she lives in a flat, how would I have ever know that? So I think yeah, I learn about these kids and it helps me too know them and it helps me to question myself as a teacher because I thought I knew my children.

S - Right, you didn't?

K - Not as well as I thought. Not at all.

S - So your talking about now? So you went on from what you did last year in someone elses class?

K - Yes, because this year we re organised the time table and I was having the year sixes a day and a half. Immediately I was able to say I want to do it again but I want to do it coming from Children as Researchers first, that's the number one and then we look at other areas we're covering for the planning. So that was fine but what I'm still finding is its still not enough time and what these children really need, and if you talk to them tomorrow I think you'll find they might say this; I'm sure they'll say it actually, is that they would just like to do their research projects for a few weeks and really get into it.

Where in the day and half I was out last week I was out on a course, we've had the 11+ today, next week we have a steel band coming in so that's three weeks on the trot where my time with them is being cut in two. I haven't got any other time in the week where I can jiggle the timetable around because I've only got them for an hour and a half. If I was full time in that class room it would give me the freedom to actually manipulate things and work through this.

S - Yes.

K - I think if I didn't have the pressures of having year six and the SATS, bearing in mind we had some seriously poor results last year so we're under enormous pressure to get our results up this year and I do find that quite hard, I do worry about that. So I think if I had a year five class and I was full time in the classroom it would be easier so that's why I think you need classroom teachers really taking this on board. As they accept their literacy and their PHSE and all their other subjects accept Children as Researchers.

(Extract from) **Tower NYR Focus group**

All right, it's recording now

-You know that sometimes teachers, they pick the same people. Well, I do think it's true. They do sometimes actually pick the most cleverest ones, but sometimes they don't. It's more likely in our class, Miss X usually picks S, M, or P or B or B or G (*names*).

Right, so you think that's true, the teachers do choose favourites do they?

-Yes they do.

-I have the opinion that that's true, yeah, they always pick the same old people. Cos I wanted to do on school council and I put my hand up and from Year 5 on, I tried to do it. But as I had my hand up, they choose the same old people, S, P and M, no one else!

OK. You sound a bit cross about that .

-I *am* cross!

You are cross about it, OK. How do you think they could do that better?

-By just choosing different people! The people who did it last time yeah, they should choose different people, yeah, they should say not you, you did it last time, let somebody else have a go.

Yes, OK, are there fairer ways of doing it than teachers choosing?

-yes

What?

-I disagree with D cos they do do it fairly, they do a vote , but they do always choose them though.

Do the teachers choose people and *then* children vote on it?

-No, the children just vote, just not the teachers. And I don't like it when(..) when (..) umm

I'll come back to you, put your finger up again if you want to talk

-Umm uhh, well this year for school council, in year 6 we have like a chair of school council and a deputy chair of school council. But Miss Y, our deputy head, she didn't let us pick this time like we normally do. She makes people do a speech for the whole school and then the school pick . This year she just picked, and she picked S and P.

OK. You look a bit cross too.

-Like, like one of my friends yeah, they wanted to get picked for school council and she only got one vote and the others got like, about 7 or 6 and stuff and like, I felt very upset because it's just rude and stuff, so ...[unclear]

Because of how your friend might feel?

-yes. And if I was in that position, I would have got very cross as well.

Yes, yes, OK.

-D'you know when they vote, yeah, they vote cos the children, yeah, cos the teachers let you vote and the children write it down on a piece of paper .I know why they keep choosing M and P and just because, people just choose them because they are their friends, they don't really choose the people that are not their friend and they should be thinking about other people too. But , oh yeah, they called them and they said, I am choosing for S and I am choosing for P and you can hear other people say it. And when the last time, yeah, cos they were saying school buddies, yeah, I wanted to vote for umm for myself but they say you can't vote for yourself so ... cos I put my hand up and they said , and they keep choosing Sand they keep choosing G and they keep choosing the same person and I felt really angry and the next week we had to choose who is going to be on the buddy and I felt really angry and I feel like ripping my shirt off and throwing it in the bin !

Oh dear! Right, I am just going to ask one more of you cos I want to move into the next question and it is going to run out.

-it is when they are choosing people and they are choosing buddies, yeah, it's like they choose the same old people over and over because G is not doing her job in the playground and them neither , none of them doing their job, but G is like walking around, doing nothing! You have to help that little boy over there, he is crying, that he has slammed his finger in the door!

-can I say something about that?

The trouble is, I want to talk about the research group really, I'm sorry, I feel really mean, but we haven't got much time and there are things that I really want to ask you. Going back to –

-can I say quickly something?

No, no, cos I have already said no to the others and –

-No, not about this thing but I just want to say that what we said, yeah, was about research, yeah, and we are from [unclear] Primary School. Will that do?

But I want to talk about- so the teachers chose who was going to be in the research group yeah, last year, when you were in year 5, alright?

-yes

How should those children have been chosen? Alright, the teachers chose them but was there a better way to choose them? How could they have done it?

-By not making the children vote, cos they would just vote for their friends every time and the teachers told them to vote yeah who do you think is worthy and they always choose their friends yeah so I don't think yeah they are choosing who is worthy, I think they are choosing their friends so I think the teachers should choose who should be on school council or school buddy.

Do you think teachers should have chosen who was in the research group last year?

-no

-no

No? How do you think they should have been chosen?

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

The information you give in this questionnaire will remain anonymous and confidential. No-one will know who wrote your answers and they will be seen only by me so please be honest when you write them.

1. Some children in your school have had the opportunity to work with an adult from a university to learn about research and to work on something they have chosen to find out about.

How did you find out that this was happening? (Circle one of the answers below. If none of these are right, you can write your own answer in the box provided.)

- a. One of the children told me
- b. My teacher told me
- c. When one of the children asked me to help with their project (perhaps by filling in a questionnaire or being interviewed)
- d. When the children presented their work in front of us
- e. I didn't know
- f. If none of these, when did you find out? (Write your answer in the box below.)

I found out because they missed a lot of lessons and they were in my class.

(Please circle your answers for questions 2 and 3.)

2. Were any of the children who have done this research in your class?

☒ Yes ☐ No

3. Were you given the opportunity to be involved?

☒ Yes ☐ No

4.	Would you have liked to be involved? (Circle your answer.)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
4a.	Why? (Write your answer here.) Because I think it is good to carry out research like what they did and you have a chance to express your opinions but no one knows who it is.	

5.	Do you think everyone should have had the chance to be involved? (Circle your answer.)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
5a.	Why? (Write your answer here.) Because you don't want all the same answers if you were doing a project you want a different range of answers and it is not fair for just some to do it. also	

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE OVER

6. How do you feel about not being involved? (You can choose more than one description if you want to.

Circle your answer(s). If none of these words are right, write your own words in the box below.)

Pleased Cross Happy Upset Relieved
Hurt Don't mind Disappointed Curious As if I am missing out on something

(Your own words)

~~Did do it~~ Like just picking on people who are good at things or something

7. If it is only possible to teach research skills in small groups, how do you think those few children should be chosen? (Choose ONE option and circle it OR write your own idea in the space below.)

- a. By picking names out of a hat
- b. By age (for example, just the oldest children in the year group)
- c. By being really good at Maths or English
- d. By teachers choosing

(Your own idea)

By people telling the teacher they want to and she/he chooses

8.	Do you think it is important for children to be able to carry out their own research projects on aspects of their lives that they choose? (Circle your answer.)	<u>Yes</u> No
8a.	Why? (Write your answer here.)	

Because they will have no idea what the people think and them, and they like doing it too.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

Sue Bucknall
The Open University

Children as Researchers Questionnaire

I am interested in your experiences of becoming a researcher in your school and would be very grateful if you could help me with my research by answering the questions below. Please be as honest as you can be. Everything you write will be treated confidentially and will remain anonymous so please do not write your name on this sheet. Please read the questions carefully and take a little time to think about your answers before you start writing.

Please circle the correct statement:

I am a girl

I am a boy

1. Do you think it is important for children in primary schools to become researchers?

Please tick: YES ☒ (if you ticked 'yes', please go to Q.2 and ignore Q.3)

NO ☐ (if you ticked 'no' please ignore Q.2 and go to Q.3)

2. Why do you think it is important for children in primary schools to become researchers?

Because you can learn a lot on a particular subject. you learn how to cope with a lot of pressure, as there was a lot of work. You also get more confident public speaking and learn how to design a good powerpoint.

3. Why don't you think it is important for children in primary schools to become researchers?

4. You have been trained as a researcher and have completed your own research project. What were the **three** most important things **for you** about doing this.
(Hint: think about what you got out of the whole process.)

I feel like I did a lot of work and I can now cope under a lot of pressure. I feel quite proud of myself for being able to do the project. I feel confident about public speaking.

Please turn over the sheet

5. Did you experience any problems or difficulties while you were having your research training or carrying out your project? If you did, please describe them below. You can describe more than one if you need to.

I didn't really but a few times I found it hard to complete the homework but when I did complete it I felt even better about myself as it was a challenge.

6. In some schools, like yours, just a few children are chosen to become researchers. In some schools, everyone in the class becomes a researcher. What are your feelings about this?

I think it's better if just a few children are researchers as otherwise you wouldn't feel ~~as~~ like the research was very important as you weren't specially picked for it. Also some of the kids might crack under all the pressure and then all the work put into their project would be wasted.

7. If you had the chance to do your research again, would you change anything or do it differently? If your answer is 'yes', please explain below.

Yes, if it was possible I would try to interview more influential people in the community.

When you have completed this questionnaire, please place it back in the brown envelope and seal the envelope. Then give the envelope and your signed consent form back to the adult who gave it to you. **Thank you very much for your help.**

16/11/06 Tower Y/R

My opinion

- 1 My first opinion is that being able to work in a group and share your ideas
- 2 Getting help when I need it.
- 3 if you want to do it or not.
- 4 To be able (to) to use a computer
- 5 being proud and showing it in front of others
- 6 Don't be ashamed of your work.
- 7 get help outside of school
- 8.

Young researcher, Tower: own statements for 'Diamond Ranking' activity

~~very~~ One of

Pagoda YK1.

Research's ~~is~~ most important feature is to be happy and comfortable with the research you're doing.

Also I think it's important to work with people you don't know as well as friends.

Getting ~~at~~ enough time to do the work and research that you need to do.

It's very important that understand what you have got to do but it's also ~~is~~ important that new and interesting are introduced to you ~~that~~ that need to be used in your work.



I have some more "life skills" I like collecting data and researching.

I can now use Microsoft ~~Excel~~ ^{Excel}!

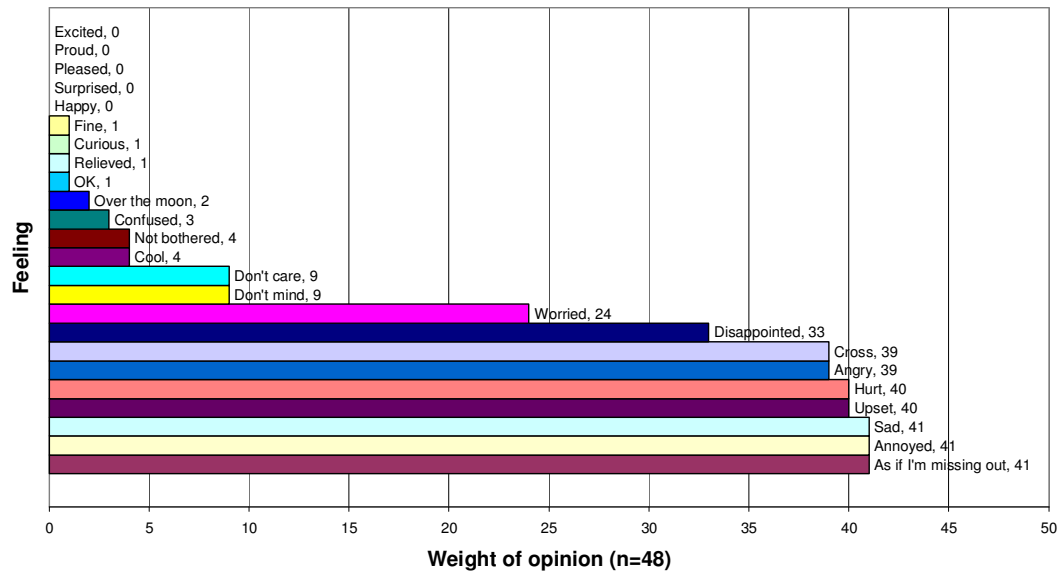
I have met new people that were in my school and people that weren't in my school.



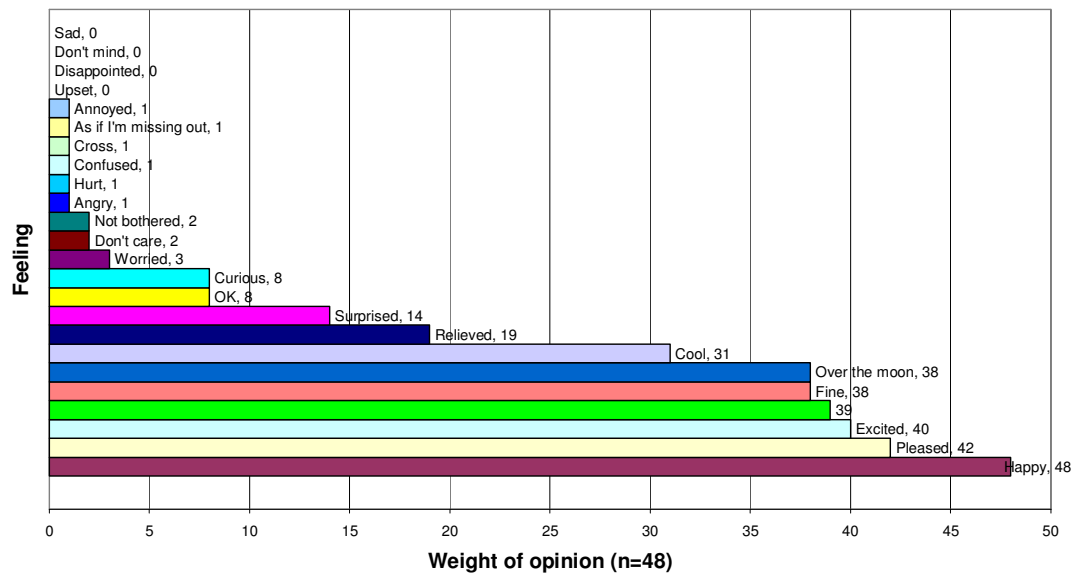
Young researcher, Pagoda: own statements for 'Diamond Ranking' activity

APPENDIX D Categorisation of feelings used for analysis of ChQ1 and participatory activities

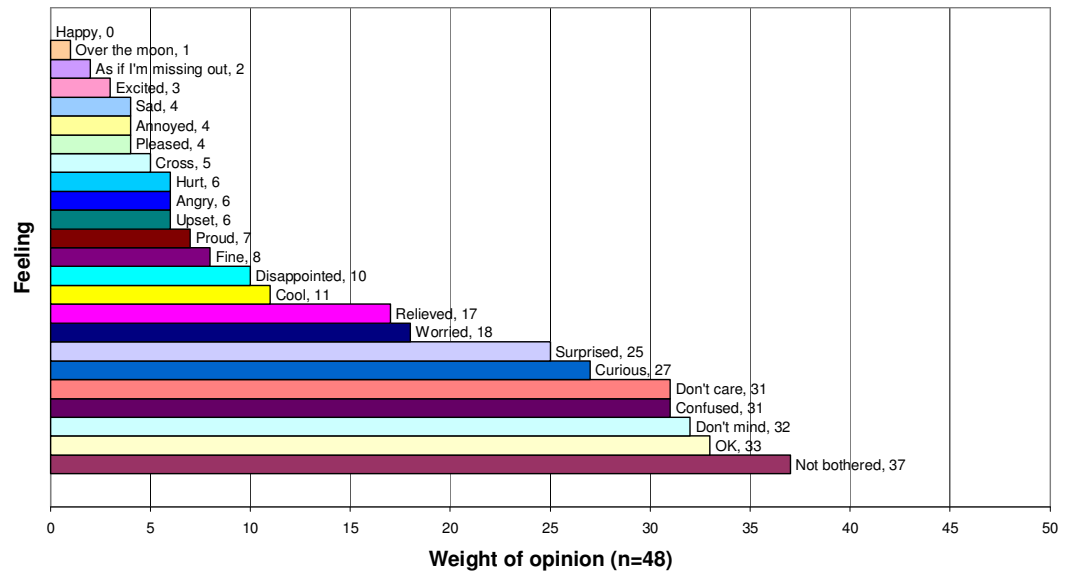
Negativity



Positivity



Neutrality ('neither' positive nor negative)



Uncertainty ('not sure')

